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# THE BIG CAGE







CLYDE BEATTY

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# BIG CAGE

BY CLYDE BEATTY  
*with*  
EDWARD ANTHONY

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NOTE: Many of the photographs here reproduced are taken from the picturization of this book, by Universal Pictures Corporation, under the title "The Big Cage."



# THE BIG CAGE



# I

## *How It's Done: The Freshman Class*

METHODS of training wild animals vary, although there are certain basic principles that all trainers observe. I now use jungle-bred animals almost exclusively. Having trained beasts born in captivity, I am cured of any further desire to make performers of such specimens. In an emergency I sometimes have to fall back on cage-born "raw material," but if possible I avoid doing so.

I am taking up the point early in this chapter because one of the popular fallacies concerning my profession is that the trainer can make his job easier by using animals born in captivity.

There is nothing cuter than a lion or a tiger cub. When born and raised in civilization such a youngster invariably is fondled and petted until he develops all the unpleasant characteristics of a spoiled child. Pampered until he is unhappy unless he has his own way, your born-in-captivity cub becomes more and more unmanageable. If you don't pick him up and stroke his back when he feels the situation calls for it, he sulks like a brat whose parents have been too indulgent. As he grows older he becomes more and more impossible. Try to discipline him and again you have on your hands the equivalent of a sullen, obstinate child.

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Cubs born in captivity simply do not have a chance. Their cuteness is their undoing. Man puts his mark on them and they are ruined. Our civilization places too high a valuation on the cute and the cunning. "Cuteness" and "cunningness" are superficial traits which should not be applauded in man or beast, it is my opinion as an amateur philosopher, unless they are accompanied by character. There is nothing more characterless than a spoiled lion or tiger cub—and nothing harder to train. I have succeeded in training animals born and reared in captivity, but the result has seldom justified the effort.

Give me animals fresh from the veldt or the jungle. Give 'em to me every time. Nine times out of ten they are more formidable than their cage-born brethren—stronger, more ferocious, and better supplied with primitive passion—but they are unspoiled and that makes up for everything else, with a margin to spare. In the jungle, cuteness bears a sadly marked-down label; it is completely lost on the animals the jungle babes grow up with, and these youngsters have to rely in the struggle for existence in the wilds on soldier things, like the ability to outfight another animal. Cuteness is of no use here.

Let me also make clear that part of the trainer's job is to out-bluff his four-legged charges. It is hard to convince an animal which has been reared in captivity that man is very formidable. To such a beast man is a softy (here "man" signifies more specially the women who visit circus menageries), begging for a chance to pat your head and stroke your back; and when you cut loose and scratch the hand that pets you, nothing really serious happens to you. You are simply dropped like

a hot cake; for who has the heart to spank the little darling that doesn't know what it's doing?

Animals fresh from the jungle can be bluffed. Man is something they know nothing about and is therefore something to be studied, and, if he is forceful enough to take command and act the rôle of boss with authority and assertiveness, to be feared. Without the ability to overawe lions and tigers and give them an inferiority complex, it would be impossible to train these creatures of the wilds. For there isn't a trainer living—or a trainer of the past, including the great ones like Bos-tock and Bonavita—who could survive in the arena for two minutes with a lion or a tiger fully aware of the relative puissance of man and beast. Your best trainers are poker-players possessed of an instinctive ability to dominate the scene and give their four-legged opponents a definite feeling of second-rateness.

When an animal attacks his trainer, it is usually because something has caused him to doubt the superiority of the two-legged creature with the chair and the whip and the gun who is issuing orders; and then the trainer, if he is to remain a trainer, must, with apparent fearlessness, insist upon obedience. The trainer may be afraid, but it would never do for him to seem so. Sometimes he has to give ground, he would be foolish not to, knowing he's at a serious disadvantage; but before much time elapses he must face the four-legged challenger again and force him to do as bidden. Animals are impressed by a seeming disregard for their al-mightiness and the trainer who shows unconcern often enough—and who also knows how to make them perform—has a chance to reach the top.

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By the time an animal reaches the United States from Asia or Africa he is "cage-broken"; that is, he is used to confinement. Sentimentalists view such confinement with alarm, not knowing that, with the exception of the great apes, animals live much longer in captivity than they do in the wilds. The extreme sentimentalists to whom I have pointed this out in conversation, counter by telling me how horrified they are to see the "poor things" pacing up and down in their cages, fairly dying for exercise. I reply that my charges are regularly given exercise in the arena. I usually add the information that wild animals are inherently lazy and that during the exercise periods my assistants and I often find it necessary to prod into action beasts that lie down for a rest.

The fact is fairly well established by now that animals which pace nervously up and down in their cages—and not one third of those in captivity have the habit—are merely giving expression to a fundamental nervousness. In the jungle, where there is no sense of confinement, the same nervousness is shown.

There are those who believe—and statements to this effect will actually be found in books on animal-training—that the trainer at once "pedestals" his new pupil and lets the beast remain in the training den indefinitely, watching other animals perform! The theory is that the watcher, seeing what is being done, will himself learn how to do it.

This theory, I regret to say, is absolute nonsense. The job would be a cinch if all a trainer had to do was let his freshmen watch the seniors perform, but animals simply aren't trained that way. And if they were, what

would be the result? The animal that is performing may be—usually is—doing something that gives the act all of that particular trick that is needed. Nine times out of ten if the pedestaled novice imitated what he saw, the trainer would have on his hands a group of performers that were all doing the same trick; and no one would pay a dime to watch that!

The only reason the beginner is pedestaled and allowed to remain so is that he may become accustomed to the arena and his surroundings in general. I do not ask much of an animal during the first two weeks of his training; I devote myself mainly to making him familiar with the arena and the tunnel leading into it.

Four animals out of five can be taught to perform if they are started early enough—that is, when they are between two and two and a half years old. Ordinarily it is unwise to try to make a performer of one that is over two and a half. I've succeeded in training animals that were four or even six years old, but these were exceptional; also, in each case, I had to do twice or three times as much work as is normally necessary. An animal that has passed the two-and-a-half-year mark is likely to have become so fixed in his habits that he is a difficult pupil.

When I say that most animals can be trained if they are started early enough, I do not mean to imply that most of them can be developed into expert performers. In the majority of cases the best that one can hope for is that the new pupil will be able to serve for "atmosphere" and do a few routine tricks. Only a select minority possess that indefinable spark and ready re-

sponsiveness that a trainer quickly recognizes as arena genius. In the animal world, natural ability is as rare as it is in the realm of humans.

When an animal is unusually tough or the time for breaking him in is limited, his first appearances in the training den are controlled from the outside. A leather collar, about two and a half inches wide, is fastened around his neck. When the beginner is a lion or a tiger, the leather used is heavy and every inch of the collar is reinforced. The buckle that fastens it in place is the strongest that can be secured and it is tested for strain before it is put in use. A heavy steel ring, with plenty of play, is slipped over the collar before the latter is attached. To this ring a chain about two feet long is fastened, and to the chain a heavy rope is tied. The big cats are very expert at the business of chewing a rope in two, no matter how heavy, and the chain serves to keep the rope out of their reach.

The rope is slipped through a heavy iron ring on the arena floor and then through the arena bars, where it is held taut by attendants who pull the pupil away from the teacher when the pupil attacks too viciously. The collar is so fastened around the beast's neck that he cannot wriggle out of it, but there is sufficient play to prevent his neck from being hurt when the attendants find it necessary to tug at the rope.

When the beginner is exceptionally vicious, a harness that fastens under the stomach, much like an ordinary dog harness but far stronger, supplements the collar, the two being fastened together.

My first job after my pupil has become used to his new surroundings—and in this phase of our story I shall confine myself to lions and tigers—is to get him

to practise entrances. I "break" him to go to the right or the left when he leaves the tunnel and enters the arena. Whichever side I dictate, that's his side of the arena during the early stages of his career. I may make several changes before I finally decide which pedestal shall be his—in fact, a properly trained animal will eventually take any seat the trainer indicates—but I do make at least a temporary decision at the beginning of each animal's course of study as to whether he is a right-sider or a left-sider.

Once I make an animal understand clearly whether he is to go to the right or the left on entering the arena, I devote myself to "seat-breaking" him. The tall, high-legged pedestal familiar to circus-goers is not used in this process. It would be too easy for the animal to crawl under such a pedestal and cause trouble. There is too much likelihood, for instance, of the rope becoming tangled around the pedestal legs.

The first seat used is what is known in the animal-training world as a "block seat." This is a solid block of wood that simplifies matters considerably. The average lion or tiger, motioned toward such a seat, understands that you want him to get up on it. Sometimes his response is only partial; that is, he merely braces himself against the block seat, his front feet resting on the edge of it. The next move is to cue him to clamber up, which is not difficult to do except when you are dealing with a suspicious animal—and suspicion is as definite an animal characteristic as it is a human characteristic. I am not being critical of my jungle friends when I say this. Life in the wilds is an unceasing battle, and the animal, however young, that hasn't had cause, at some

time or other, to be suspicious of all living creatures has played in luck. Some animals are more suspicious than others. There are the four-legged optimists that are always willing to take a chance, regardless of how much right they have to doubt, and there are the four-legged cynics that doubt everything.

Irrespective of how much of a doubting Thomas an animal may naturally be, once his trainer gets him up on a block seat and he sees that nothing is happening to him, he is sold. It is not difficult to persuade him to mount this perch again and again, unless, in addition to dealing with a doubting Thomas, you are up against a jungle villain—a potential killer, in other words.

While I always start the “seat-breaking” of an animal by teaching him to get up on a block seat, I also have regular pedestals, of different heights, in the arena. After a pupil has been “block-seated,” it is fairly easy to make him try the other pedestals. When he finds he can go scampering from seat to seat until he reaches the highest perch in the arena without anything happening to him, he begins to develop confidence in his new surroundings.

Listlessness in a beginner is an almost infallible sign of trouble ahead. A lively freshman may not do what you ask of him, but he is likely to pan out in the end. The sluggish beast, on the other hand, is usually sullen and resentful. What seems mere inertia proves, oftener than not, to be closely allied to vicious rebellion. The sulky animal frequently acts as if he were expecting to be attacked, and when he discovers that there is to be no attack he slowly develops into a worthy performer; but, before this happens, the trainer takes risks that the results do not often justify. In other words, while he

may succeed in making his cantankerous pupil perform, when the job is over the net result is likely to be another one of those routine performers that can't be given a higher mark than sixty per cent when the examinations are held.

The block seats are so built that the beginner, climbing upon one for the first time, can feel really comfortable. If he wants to, he can lie down and think things over before he makes the next move. He has a whole "table" on which to stretch out. I never disturb such rest periods—and even the most alert lions and tigers take them—for, having pedestaled my animal, I feel I have accomplished something and I don't press him too hard. The only inertia that disturbs me is that which manifests itself before the pedestaling.

Animal-training is laborious. Often I have worked a whole week on a lion or a tiger, merely to teach the animal to place its front feet against the block seat. I have worked even longer than this to achieve a similar result when my stubborn charge happened to be a particularly handsome creature or something about him gave me a hunch (animal-trainers are frequently hunch-players) that he was potentially a great performer. Sometimes these hunches work out and the results are gratifying; much oftener they do not. But you have to be something of a gambler to be an animal-trainer, and the real trainer keeps on playing hunches, unmindful of those that have proved wrong.

In the early stages of training the block seat is placed flush against the bars of the arena, to keep the animal from getting between the back of the seat and the bars. I usually drive my new pupil into a corner, where the

seat and the bars meet, and then I tap the top of the block with a light buggy whip. Unlike the whip I use during regular performances in the arena, this one does not crack. At this early stage of the game a cracking sound would only startle my pupil, perhaps even cause him to attack. Sometimes I have to touch the top of the block seat with the whip twenty or thirty times before I make my lion or tiger understand that he is being asked to ascend. Occasionally when an animal's mind is obviously wandering, I touch him lightly on the ear with the whip to get his attention, but I do not hit him. There are two reasons for this: one is that it would be signally unfair; the second, that it would accomplish nothing.

I have heard all kinds of weird stories about cruel practices to which trainers are supposed to resort when breaking in new animals. There is the familiar story about those who jab their animals with pointed steel rods to make them perform. I'd like to see any one do this to a wild animal—especially in the case of the great cats—and get away with it. He would be safe, of course, while the animal was collared and tied, but the day of reckoning would come. I've taken many chances in my time—as many, I believe, as any trainer ever has—but one chance I shouldn't be willing to take would be to face an untied lion or tiger that I'd once jabbed with a pointed rod.

There also is a story about men who teach their animals to obey by searing them, in the early stages of training, with red-hot irons. Such stories persist, although, in the whole history of animal-training, there is no record of any one having ever seen a trainer resort to the methods described.

As far as I can determine, the story of the red-hot irons originated about forty years ago when a visitor to the training quarters of Frank C. Bostock, the greatest trainer of his time, saw some irons being heated in a coke fire. The visitor did not contend that he had seen Bostock apply one of these red-hot irons to an animal (which would have burned unpretty holes in any animal's coat). All he said was that he had seen the irons in the fire. With nothing more than this to go on, the over-zealous gentleman accused Bostock of cruel practices. Bostock explained: "This is the winter season, and it is my practice in cold weather to put hot irons into the drinking-water of the animals. This practice is always observed in my show during the winter months. It has the value of taking the chill off the water, and also imparts some of the beneficial qualities of the iron, thus giving an iron tonic and drinkable water at the same time."

I disagree with Bostock's theory about the "iron tonic," as I do with other of his theories about how to keep animals healthy, but there is no doubt in my mind that the accusation against him was absurd. Even if his had been a cruel nature—and it was distinctly not—Frank Bostock had too much sense to poke an animal with a hot iron and then expect it to perform. He knew, as all successful trainers know, that two of the greatest factors in securing results in my little-understood profession are kindness and patience.

My winter quarters at Peru, Indiana, where I put in the winter months training new animals and teaching the old ones new tricks, are open to the public. People are permitted to stroll around, free, and watch me at work. Thousands of people have seen me put any num-

ber of animals through every phase of their training, and if any one has ever seen me resort to cruel practices, I'd like to have his name and address.

To save my life or to keep an animal from being chewed up, I have sometimes resorted to strong-arm measures. After all, mine is not a pink-tea profession. In desperate emergencies, I have had to stun an animal or let ammonia fly to break a death-grip. On other occasions, I have "hosed" an animal that was bent on killing. A powerful stream of water is not without its effect; it momentarily stops the would-be killer's breathing, and he loosens his hold in order to catch his breath.

These things I admit—and defend. But as for jabbing animals with pointed rods and poking them with hot irons, that is pure bunk.

In working a new animal without collar and rope—an animal that the trainer senses can be fairly well trusted to roam the arena—the first principle to observe is not to keep at the pupil too long. When I'm working a "free" animal and I cannot pedestal him within five minutes or so, I dismiss him and let him relax. Then I work on him again in about an hour. I carry a stick in my left hand and a whip in my right, and maneuver the pupil's position so that four times out of five his effort to get away from me results in his landing on top of the block seat.

The experienced trainer knows when his pupil is tiring or growing irritable. There are certain infallible indications. For instance, when the ears of a cat go flat against the head and the tail starts nervously moving

back and forth, it is time to call a halt. An animal that reacts in this fashion is generally very dangerous.

I prefer noisy resentment. Nine times out of ten the beast that manifests his displeasure by roaring or snarling makes less trouble in the end. Often he accompanies his noisy demonstration with a swipe at the stick in my hand, taking it out on the stick rather than on me. His rebellion is frank, unmistakable, in the open. He is merely disobedient, while the quieter rebel is usually in full mutiny and waiting for an opportunity to strike, and strike with a vengeance. The quiet and sullen rebels frequently prove to be killers. Unable to destroy their trainer, they attack the nearest animal—often, not long after they are permitted to perform for the first time with the rest of the troupe.

One of my tests is to run a lion or a tiger into the arena and then stand outside and crack a big whip. The animal that lunges at the bars and seems a villain is likely to prove manageable eventually. It is the one that eyes me sullenly and, without making a sound, moves to the back of the arena and lies down, that causes most trouble in the end. To the uninitiated observer he seems either cowed or uninterested in what is going on; but the experienced trainer feels fairly sure that one day that beast will raise the devil in the big cage. I always make a mental note to watch him constantly.

Each and every animal that passes through my hands is placed under observation for two weeks. At the end of that time I know whether I can inaugurate his arena education with or without a collar. During the first of these two weeks, I make my observations from outside

the arena. During the second week, I station myself, chair in hand, inside the safety-cage that leads into the arena. The chair doesn't mean much in this early stage, except that it accustoms the pupil to a "prop" that he's going to see a good deal of. At regular intervals I partially open the door leading into the arena, to note the animal's reaction.

Sometimes the reaction is an effort to escape, which the pupil makes by rushing to the door through which he entered the arena. Although the door is closed, and his surroundings are new to him, he knows that this is where he came in and that it is also a means of egress. Unable to escape, he may do one of several things. Remaining on the far side, he may pace back and forth or he may lie down to think things over.

Another type of animal will try to attack me the second I open the door of the safety-cage. It is up to me to decide whether this rush has its roots in viciousness or in curiosity. Four or five times I repeat the process of opening and shutting the door, making mental notes of my pupil's conduct. If he lunges harder and harder at the steel door that separates him from me, it doesn't necessarily mean that he is an unmanageable demon. He may prove to be exactly that, but the chances are that he is merely a spirited young creature trying to find out all about the figure behind the bars.

After a day or two I have enough information on which to operate. My conclusions are sometimes faulty, but my tests usually enable me to determine at least which are the animals that must be roped and collared before I can enter the arena with them, and which I can start on a free basis.

In most instances, when I step into the arena for the

first time with an untied and untried beast, he will halt in his tracks and stare hard at me. His next move is most significant. Either he will conclude that I have no intention of harming him (this frequently happens, curiously enough, in the case of animals that lunge hard at the bars before I enter) or he will consider me an enemy that he has to fight. If he looks upon me as an enemy, he will spring straight at me and try to knock me down.

When these early rushes are made by lions, I do not mind them much. Lions are great bluffers and when I stand my ground and meet or side-step such a rush, it is seldom repeated. My maned beginners don't know just how to take me, and when an experimental rush accomplishes nothing, they calm down.

It is the first rush of a tiger that worries me most. When a striped cat comes tearing at me, I use every ruse at my command to defend myself and to make plain to him that I am the boss. To me the arena is familiar ground, while to him it is a strange place; and this gives me a slight advantage, although it doesn't alter the fact that I have to fight off a determined tiger, which is a very real problem.

Most trainers on leaving the safety-cage, to face an animal, shout to the beginner. My own experience is that this is too startling. Whether it is that my voice is at fault or that the method is not the best, I don't know. At any rate, after trying it out years ago, I abandoned it and I haven't shouted at an animal a dozen times since. As I slowly and cautiously leave the safety-cage, I start whistling. I find this the most effective way of saying "howdy." The first day, I do not venture very far from the cage, I frankly admit; it is a grand retreat in an emergency. The next day, I go farther into the

arena, until, after a few days, I am face to face with my new charge.

There is, as I have already indicated, no standard method of training wild animals. Each beast presents a particular problem and the trainer, while he places a certain dependence in a few basic truths that apply to all wild creatures, has to rely in the final analysis on his own ingenuity. In most cases, two or three days suffice to bring me and my pupil together. By about the third day, I start cracking my whip as a means of securing his attention. The proper assertiveness in popping this harmless noise-maker also helps to convince the newcomer that the two-legged being that is facing him is his boss.

Within a month, I usually have a rookie animal taking any one of six seats in the arena. I keep him hopping from pedestal to pedestal at my command. Then one by one, five of the seats are removed and the pupil soon understands that the one remaining is his own special perch in the ring.

It is amazing how a new performer who is beginning to respond to cues recognizes the exact place in the arena that is his. For this reason it is most important that my attendants shall "set" the arena properly. I recall an instance where an animal, standing on the spot I had selected for him, refused to mount his pedestal which had been mistakenly placed about two feet to the right of this point. He remained on the floor, stubbornly ignoring the misplaced seat, and not until the pedestal was moved to the place where he knew it belonged did he ascend. Because of occurrences of this kind, I now personally supervise the setting of the

arena before each training session and each performance.

Once I have "broken" an animal to a particular seat, I set myself the seemingly contradictory task of "un-breaking" him. In a really great act, no animal is confined to any particular seat for the whole performance. A spectacular act—one in which all sorts of interesting groupings figure—cannot be built around a hard and fast rule of one and only one seat for each animal. It is an interesting fact that animals can be made to catch the spirit of variation and once they get the idea they leap from seat to seat the second they are cued, with an almost joyous abandon. After they become skilled performers, the less routine their work is, the better they seem to like it. They respond to cues with a sensitiveness that belies the dull supineness with which some writers credit arena veterans.

After an animal is made to realize that he must not regard any particular pedestal as his one and only perch, I begin unbreaking him on another count—his "arena side." Up to a certain point, each of my four-legged charges is taught to regard the right or the left of the arena as his special stamping-ground. This is sound training. But as soon as my animals—lions and tigers—understand this clearly, it is my job to make them understand something else; the pupil must be prepared for the next step in his training. He must now unlearn that he is a right-sider or a left-sider.

When an animal has the right or left side of the arena so definitely fixed in his mind that his operations are purely mechanical and he shows no signs of responding

to my efforts to make a "two-sider" of him, I have to go to work on him. I build a barricade of pedestals, behind which I stand : if he is used to the left side, the barricade is so arranged that he has to go to the right, and vice versa.

Once I found myself behind one of these walls of pedestals on the right, trying to accustom a new tiger to going to the left. The pedestals were so arranged that I was completely shut off from the animal and this wall had the effect of halting him in his tracks and making him veer off to the side I wanted him to get used to. This expedient works ninety-nine times out of a hundred. But on this particular day, the unexpected took place. To my astonishment the tiger leaped over the wall of pedestals, which was about six feet high, and I was in the cut-off area with him, neatly trapped! The tiger seemed unaware of his advantage. He actually seemed to be looking for the spot where up to now his pedestal had been placed. Reaching what my eye told me was probably the exact spot where I had seated him for weeks until this new experiment came along to puzzle him, he looked around in complete bewilderment. Up to that point, he had not appeared to know of my presence; he was looking for a pedestal, not for me. Now, there being no pedestal, he concentrated on me. Crouching, he glared at me and I poised myself for the inevitable spring. Holding my chair straight out as firmly as possible, I dropped to my knees. The animal overleapt, springing right over me and knocking over two of the pedestals that formed the inclosure. While attendants worked away with prods, I climbed out between the upset pedestals.

No longer cornered, I was less worried, but I was by

no means through. I could have retreated to the safety-cage, but I had brought this tiger along to a point where I felt he was potentially a first-class performer and I believed that if I let him back me out of the arena, the work of many weeks would be undone. A retreat of the sort does not always mean that the effort you've expended is a total loss, but it would have been so in the case of this striped cat. A trainer senses these things intuitively.

Frankly, if I had felt that my situation was desperate, I would have made for the safety-cage whether or not it meant the ruining of a good prospect; but now that I was no longer trapped, I knew I could manage the tiger, which seemed more befuddled than vicious. I very definitely felt that it would be a mistake not to have a showdown here and now. With blustering assurance which was pure bluff, I dashed forward, and, with my chair held straight out in front of me, drove the animal to the block seat on the left that had been my original objective. I had very little trouble with him after this. It was not long before I was able to make him take any seat in the arena.

When the beginning performer can be cued to leave his pedestal for any other one that is indicated, I train him to pose. He is taught to stretch out so that his hind legs remain on his pedestal and his fore legs rest on a support placed in front of him. A group of lions and tigers posed in this fashion gives the onlooker a striking idea of the power and beauty of the great creatures.

Sometimes a trainer wastes weeks of work on an animal that looks good at the start but doesn't produce in the end. Czar was one of the finest lion rookies I've ever handled. A majestic-looking beast, he had none

of the gawkiness that is characteristic of many two-year-olds. I got him seat-broken in record time—he was a marvel of responsiveness in the early stages of his training—and then for some unaccountable reason he ceased functioning. He didn't understand at all when I started shifting him from one seat to another. In fact, he became so confused that a few days after I began the shifting process I was unable to get him to take his original seat! I had to start work on him all over again, with a collar. After a week, I was pedestaling him once more, but he was not the same animal. His movements, once characterized by a bustling eagerness, were now sluggish and half-hearted. Something had snapped inside that animal's brain—or something had gone numb. I worked and worked on him, but I could not get him to show any signs of his former responsiveness. Finally admitting defeat, I sold him to a zoo.

I cite this case to give the reader an idea of how much patience a trainer must have. Often an animal on which he puts in weeks, sometimes months, of work proves worthless as a performer.

All sorts of stories occur to me that I could easily include in this chapter on the early stages of training. For example, there was Hector, a lion whose reactions were unusual. I made the interesting discovery that this animal—a collar-rope-and-chain pupil—could not be trusted in the training ring with all his trappings off even after he was seat-broken, but that he could be made to perform perfectly and without resistance with the rope alone removed. With a collar around his neck and the chain dangling, he acted as if he were still a

captive, and did my bidding as meekly as if he were a rabbit, not a lion, but the second I removed them he came tearing at me madly and I had my hands full keeping him off. Hard and resourceful work failed to make Hector perform without the collar and chain on, and as I couldn't very well put him in an act with these appendages, I finally had to give him up as another one of those interesting failures.

I am often asked whether facial characteristics do not aid me in sizing up the new pupils I am called upon to face in the arena.

Unquestionably there are certain signs that give me valuable information. For instance, almost without exception, animals whose eyes are wide apart—and this particularly applies to the great cats—are less vicious than animals whose eyes are close together.

I never place much dependence on long-nosed cats. Nine times out of ten they are more vicious than their shorter-nosed brethren.

A long nose and a narrow head are often the signs of an inbred, and when I meet the combination I do everything I can to avoid the task of training the beast so unfortunately branded. An inbred is an animal produced by breeding from a male and female of the same parentage or very closely related to each other.

The animal that habitually lays his ears flat against his head is usually one to be distrusted: almost invariably he has a mean disposition and a nasty temper, though any lion or tiger will do this occasionally.

Having informed the reader concerning the fundamentals, I shall attempt in the next chapter to tell how

## THE BIG CAGE

animals are taught to perform the tricks that people pay money to see when they enter a circus tent or auditorium. The training involved offers more excitement than do the basic but less colorful lessons. Teaching animals to perform really difficult tricks is, from the layman's point of view, the most interesting part of my work.

## II

### *How It's Done: Advanced Trickology*

**G**LLOBE-ROLLING is a real step forward in the career of a big cat—lion, tiger, or leopard—that is studying to be a performer. When I start an animal on such advanced work, it is a definite sign that he or she is thoroughly schooled in the A-B-C's. It means, in other words, that my pupil has mastered all the fundamentals and is ready for more complicated studies.

Automatically I eliminate, when I consider the question of new globe-rollers, any beast that has displayed extreme nervousness under stress, with the attendant possibility that he is likely to lose his head when the going becomes hard. Even when the animal has marked intelligence and has mastered the fundamentals, if he has ever shown any signs of going to pieces I reserve him for work that doesn't require the cool restraint that is an essential part of the make-up of a successful globe-roller.

Having selected my pupil, I must next "barrel-break" him. An animal is not expected to tackle so difficult and elusive an object as a globe without some preparation. What is chosen for this is a barrel-like cylinder whose surface is covered with a thick matting that enables the animal to dig in with his claws and keep his footing.

First the pupil is pedestaled a number of times in

succession. Then the pedestal is removed and the cylinder is put in its place. But so that the pupil's task may not be too difficult at the start, the cylinder is held firm by means of sticks nailed to the floor. The idea is to accustom the animal to one new thing at a time. It would be asking too much to expect him to get used to his new perch and its rolling motion simultaneously.

When the pupil is used to his cylindrical roost, I have the sticks that hold the cylinder firm moved down a foot or so. The cylinder, which is set on a "skid," or track, starts rolling, and for the first time the animal is faced with the problem of balancing himself on a moving object. When his footwork is good enough to enable him to hold on over this short distance, the sticks are moved so that the cylinder has an additional foot's play on the skid.

Sometimes this is too much for the pupil and he goes toppling to the floor. After about a dozen tries, however, he usually learns to balance himself over this short distance. The big cat that remains stationary when the cylinder is in motion cannot hope to keep his footing. Nine times out of ten my future globe-roller—and I'd like to remind the reader that an intelligent animal is selected for such an assignment—instinctively moves forward with the roll of the barrel and in trying to keep up with it succeeds in remaining aboard it. When this happens after enough practice, he begins to develop a knowledge of how to keep his footing on a rolling object.

At the start, the amount of roll to which an animal is subjected is slight. It is controlled by an assistant and me, each of us carrying a T-shaped stick. Because my assistant stands outside the arena, his stick has to be

much longer than mine. His job consists of shoving the cylinder from behind and making it roll. This is the only way we can hope to move a mat-covered barrel on which is perched several hundred pounds of jungle cat.

When my assistant finds it difficult to move the cylinder, I assist him from my post inside the arena, with my shorter but just as sturdy T-shaped wooden prod. The only other equipment I carry, with the exception of a kitchen chair, which I always keep handy, is the light buggy whip mentioned in the preceding chapter. This I play lightly on the hind legs of the animal as a reminder of my presence. It has the effect of making him move his legs forward, and this is the surest way of aiding him to keep his footing when the cylinder is in motion.

Once the animal begins to feel at home on this device, he is ready for a try at a regular globe, although, in the beginning, this also is covered with matting as an aid to surer footing. The globe used is a heavy one made of solid wood, two and a half feet in diameter. This, like the cylinder, is placed on a track. At the start the globe is permitted to have no play and the animal is cued to mount it as though it were a regular pedestal.

When he has grown used to this new perch, he is put through the rest of the routine that was outlined in connection with the matted cylinder. The wooden bars holding the globe stationary are moved until the big wooden ball has a fair amount of play. When my new globe-roller has learned to balance himself with the sphere in motion over a distance of a few feet, the bars are removed and I set to work in earnest.

Outside the arena stands an attendant with the long T-shaped stick that I mentioned earlier. I stand inside

with my shorter stick of the same type and set the pace. That is, I start the globe moving; the boy keeps following with his longer stick.

That the reader may see the picture more clearly, let me say that the starting-point of our operations is near the arena bars, with the animal's back toward the bars. I cannot devote myself exclusively to keeping the globe in motion—for I must watch the animal every second of the time and be ready to meet an attack—and in the main it devolves upon the attendant to keep the sphere going.

One of the novice's most natural reactions is to stand stiffly bracing himself, to keep the globe from moving. The attendant then gently pushes from behind and automatically the animal, in his struggle to keep his balance, moves the wooden ball forward. After a series of rehearsals of this kind the pupil begins to develop the knack of balancing himself. Some animals are instinctive balancers and readily pick up the trick, while others learn only after much effort has been expended by the trainer.

When the next stage is reached, the boy and his T-shaped stick move out of the picture. My own shorter stick of this same description also is now unnecessary. For now the track on which the sphere moves is slightly sloped downward. I stand in front of the balancer so that he moves toward me. Once he is able to keep his balance, the slope is done away with and I devote myself to cueing him to keep the ball in motion by the proper movement of his feet.

This trick mastered, the matting is removed from the great wooden sphere, which has a smooth surface, and

I begin the task of getting my pupil used to the slick footing. In most cases, if he has really learned the principles of equilibrium, this can be accomplished in three or four drills. The first trial with the smooth, uncovered globe is always a test of whether I have properly schooled my pupil in the rudiments. If an animal, after a series of tries, shows no capacity for coping with the new situation, I know that I haven't succeeded in making him understand how to keep his footing on a revolving object, and I start him all over again, going through the whole laborious process once more.

My final task—and this comes only after virtual perfection in maintaining his equilibrium is achieved by the globe-roller—is to get the animal to perform his feat of balancing at an elevation of five feet. The ball and track are placed on supports of this height, for unless the globe-rolling trick is performed at an elevation, most people in a circus audience will be unable to view it properly.

Duchess, a handsome tigress, developed with surprising rapidity as a globe-roller. In fact, she mastered the intricacies of globe-rolling in less time than any cat I have ever handled. She not only picked up the trick more speedily but she performed it with more spirit than any of my other feline pupils. She positively seemed to enjoy herself as she deftly maneuvered the smooth wooden ball across the track. Audiences always applauded her efforts and she apparently appreciated their enthusiasm. This is only a guess, for I do not possess a fluoroscopic eye and do not pretend to know what is going on in the minds of wild animals, but at least hers was an electric response to applause—a fact which

she manifested by repeating her globe-rolling routine (giving an encore, in other words) when the plaudits of the mob happened to be particularly lusty!

One day several years ago, we were giving a performance in a small town in Wisconsin. It had been raining hard all morning and the big wooden ball used in Duchess' specialty had been soaked. In playing one-night stands it is very difficult, with all the work there is to be done, to prevent props of this kind from occasionally lying around outdoors, but the attendants had strict instructions to examine all my working props before they were placed in the arena and to dry any of them that chanced to be wet or even damp.

As I have said, my practice is to inspect the arena before each performance, to make sure it is properly set. My investigation on this particular day was very hasty because the driving rain-storm had delayed the rearing of the big top and we were all behind schedule and working like demons to be on time for the matinée —for after the first downpour the skies began to clear and it looked as if we had a fair chance for a "house."

All went well with my act that afternoon until Duchess's turn came to perform. She leaped to the top of one of the pedestals that supported the skid and from there on top of the wet globe. The treacherous surface was something entirely new to her, and, slipping before she could balance herself on top of the wooden sphere, she went toppling to the floor of the arena. She brushed past me in her descent. I got out of her way in a rush, for in a situation of this kind it is not unusual for a tiger to attack. To my complete surprise the amazing animal, seemingly undaunted by the accident, which would have put most tigers in a fighting mood,

ascended the pedestal again and was back on top of the globe in no time at all!

By now I realized that the great wooden sphere was wet and I would have gladly excused Duchess from her duties. But she didn't want to be excused. She wanted to perform. In the most remarkable exhibition of equilibration I have ever witnessed, the tigress reached the end of the skid (which, of course, has a wooden border to keep the ball from going off into space). As she neared the end, I thought she was surely going to fall, but after a game struggle she managed to hang on.

I could hardly believe it when Duchess reached the end and started the second half of her job, which consisted in rolling the ball back to the starting-point. But the feat was too difficult for even so nimble a cat. Suddenly she slipped, and in her effort to right herself, lost her balance completely. In a last frantic effort to regain it she went over the side of the performing board, carrying the ball with her! Down went tigress and globe to the floor of the arena with a crash. As they fell, I ran over to do what I could to keep the animal from being injured by the moving sphere. But Duchess leaped clear and the heavy ball hit the floor as I came up. It rolled toward me and banged against my legs, knocking them from under me.

Duchess came tearing at me. I hadn't time to get to my feet. Swinging up to a sitting position, I "blanked" the onrushing animal with the pistol I always keep ready for action during a solo stunt involving a lion or a tiger. (This was one of three situations during my whole career that called for firing at an animal from the arena floor.) Close-range blanking was not to Duchess's liking and she backed away as I fired until I

had emptied the gun. The smell of smoke and burning powder momentarily choked her and confused her sufficiently to give me a chance to scramble to my feet. With the aid of my ever present chair, which I managed to grab quickly, I succeeded in getting the tigress back on her regular pedestal.

I regretted this experience, for Duchess was an intelligent, responsive animal and I wanted to keep her good-will—to as great an extent, that is, as any one can hope for the good-will of a cat animal. Fortunately, she promptly forgot the incident and continued her career with the same zest until I abandoned the globe-rolling part of my act a few years later. After I employ a particular trick up and down the country for a certain period of time, I feel I owe it to the circus-going public to substitute something else for it.

Before I leave the subject of globe-rolling, let me say that the most skilled animal of all, in the performance of this feat, is the bear. But this has no significance, as a bear's hind legs are built in a way that makes it much easier for him to perform the trick than it is for a lion, a tiger, or a leopard. In fact, an intelligent bear, with his ability to stand upright, can be taught to mount a globe and keep it in motion with his hind legs alone. I have had as many as three bears in my arena rolling globes at the same time and I consider this less difficult to accomplish than it is to teach any one of the great cats the same trick.

Teaching a lion or a tiger to jump through a flaming hoop is another interesting phase of advanced trickology. Three pedestals, involving two jumps, are used in this stunt. In other words, there is a leap from the

first pedestal to the second and from the second to the third. The distance between pedestals is about ten feet; at least, that is the distance during a performance before an audience. Beginners are not required to jump nearly so long a distance at the start.

The fire hoops are placed on stands; but these are not produced until the animal is perfectly at home in making the jumps from pedestal to pedestal, and is making them without coaxing or prodding. At first, of course, no fire is used; for it would be asking too much of even the brightest animal to expect him to make the transition from a pedestal jump to a jump through a flaming hoop without an intermediate step.

The hoops that are used are five feet in diameter and made of iron. When my pupil has grown accustomed to leaping through the hoops and his conduct indicates that he is no longer conscious of their presence, I get him ready for the next stage of his development, which involves jumping through *partially* flaming hoops. Around the hoops a substance similar to lamp wicking, which is treated with gasoline, is wrapped and held in place with wire.

The beginner is not expected to jump through a hoop whose wick covering has been entirely soaked in gasoline: only the sides are gasoline-treated at first, so that he does not have much fire to contend with. When he grows familiar with the partial spurts of flame—and this does not usually take long, for those animals chosen for the work are carefully selected and can be counted upon for steady nerves—we are ready for the next step. The entire wrapping is now saturated with gasoline and is lighted at top and bottom as well as at the sides. The result is a completely flaming hoop. Four times out of

five the beginner will balk when he first faces the fully fired hoops.

In the case of a balky animal, there is only one thing to do and that is to stop working him with lighted hoops and start him all over again with the plain iron ones. As soon as your charge once more jumps through these with a certain amount of assurance, you return to the flame hoops, beginning as before with those that are only partially lit. Next, you must get the animal through the full flames. Strangely enough, the second try is often successful. Incidentally, as the big cat leaps through the burning circle at lightning speed, he usually doesn't singe a single hair, and after a while he performs the trick with a confidence and cockiness that might easily be interpreted as indications that he is having a good time.

When my flame-jumper becomes really proficient, I carry him along to another stage. I substitute a horse for the third pedestal, and train the cat to make a spectacular landing on the horse's back after leaping through the second fire hoop.

This trick requires a horse that isn't afraid of wild animals and is at the same time strong enough to stand having four to six hundred pounds of flying lion or tiger land suddenly on his back. Most horses have a deadly fear of lions and tigers, and for arena work with these jungle creatures a horse must be not only fearless but devoid of nerves.

Then too, no matter how courageous he may be, he must have time to grow used to the offensive scent of the great cats. It is difficult to get our circus horses to go

anywhere near the cat-barn; the scent is enough to make them plunge away in the opposite direction. To accustom a horse to the scent of lions and tigers we turn him loose in the arena immediately after the cats have left it. No effort is made to train him in any details of his ultimate rôle, at this stage of the game; he is allowed to roam the arena at will. In two or three cases that I recall, I found it helpful to let him remain there overnight.

When the horse has become accustomed to the arena and the smell of cats, I turn my future horseback-riding lion—for I most often use a lion in this act—loose in the arena and have attendants hold the horse not many feet from the bars where the beast inside can get a good look at him. Almost without exception, the lion—even the comparatively trustworthy type I select for an assignment of this kind—comes tearing over and hurls himself at the bars when he sees that much nice fresh horse meat on the hoof. And the attendants have no cinch in keeping the horse from bolting.

When the horse quiets down, I send the lion back to his cage and again turn my equine loose in the arena. This procedure is repeated over and over.

At last the day comes when I am ready to put my lion and horse in the arena at the same time—and it is always a day in which I do plenty of worrying! The trainer who breezily tells you that a task of this kind doesn't worry him—even if he has emerged from similar assignments successfully in the past—either isn't telling the truth or has developed an unintelligent callousness. More than one trainer has been erased because he failed to observe a cardinal principle of animal-

training, which is this: never take anything for granted and never fully trust a cat animal, even one that has behaved well over a considerable period of time.

The first day a horse is called upon to share an arena with a lion, he is not expected to face a free performer. The maned beast is held in check by attendants outside the ring by means of a rope that is fastened to a collar around the lion's neck. The saddle that is placed on the horse's back is not an ordinary one. It is very wide, and although the spectator, seated a fair distance away, does not realize the fact, it is made of wood camouflaged by clever painting. The horse is almost entirely covered with a thick leather blanket so that if the lion slips he won't claw his mount as he struggles to hang on.

Obviously, the back of the horse's head is dangerously close to the lion's jaw, and this is another fact that has to be considered. Over the horse's neck and the whole back of his head, including the ears, is placed a shield of heavy two-ply leather held together with nails the points of which protrude in the direction of the lion, to discourage biting.

During his first few meetings with his maned rider, the horse's legs are completely covered, with a very strong triple-ply "treated" canvas. The reason for covering the legs is that few lions can resist mauling the underpinnings of a brand-new animal acquaintance, especially when that acquaintance is a long-legged beast which furnishes a perfect target for such an attack.

The horse, when he is first confronted with the lion in the training ring, is held by a strong-armed attendant—and let me add that there are very few circus hands who are willing to enter an inclosure that also houses one of the great cats. In this first meeting, I do not at-

tempt any actual training feats. The idea is to accustom the lion and the horse to each other, with as much distance between them as is possible in a thirty-two-foot arena. The horse enters first, then his future rider.

I stand in the center of the ring, prepared to keep the peace—or attempt to—in case there is an encounter. Our most important task is to make the horse stand absolutely motionless while the lion enters. If the horse moves as much as a foot, the lion, watching intently, is as likely as not to spring. This I learned from bitter experience. If my assistant has sufficient control over the horse to keep him stationary, my work is made much simpler. The lion, in a case like this, usually confines himself to glaring at the stranger and emitting an occasional low, guttural growl. Sometimes he doesn't even growl or glare—just watches the other like a hawk; but this is true only when I am lucky enough to find an unusually manageable lion for the stunt.

It is customary to have about three sessions in which the lion and the horse are given a chance to become acquainted. The next step is to get the horse used to having a weight suddenly land on his back. I begin with the aid of the heaviest trained dog I can find. Once my horse is used to having a big, heavy dog land on his back, I am ready to try him with a lion.

If my account of all these preliminaries gives you the impression that the life of an animal-trainer has a definite laboriousness about it, let me assure you that your deductions are correct. It is a thrilling life—I'm sure almost any one will concede that—but it also has its dull and arduous tasks. My reason for pointing this out is that I am sick unto death of reading about the mythical animal-trainer, in fiction stories, mostly, who by

waving a magic hand or looking an animal in the eye with a hypnotic fixity can make his four-legged charge do anything except play the piano.

As soon as I have definitely conquered the beast's instinctive desire to attack a strange animal when the latter swings into action, I am virtually ready to attempt the actual feat that is the objective of all this preparatory drudgery. The only other preliminary involves the business of gradually bringing the lion and the horse closer and closer together. When they can be brought within a few feet of each other without disastrous consequences, I am really ready to go ahead with my main business.

Let me remind the reader that the lion, after sailing through the second hoop in the feat described earlier, lands on his third and last pedestal. Where the pedestal has been before, I place my horse. Watching every move my lion makes, I send him, in a preliminary drill, through the hoops (which are not lighted until we reach a much more advanced stage in the development of our stunt).

Naturally, the first thing the lion does after landing on the horse's back is to dig his teeth into the back of his mount's neck—or what looks like the back of the neck. Encountering the nails that protect the horse, he learns quickly that, as far as this method of attack is concerned, he is wasting his time.

Absolute carefulness in every detail is essential if the stunt is to come off successfully, but the animal-trainer has to delegate much of the routine work to assistants. The trainer who attempted to do everything himself would wind up in a madhouse in no time at all. The normal strain attached to facing wild animals—especially

green beasts, who make the most trouble—is enough for any one man, however intrepid, to contend with. He has to supervise the work of his helpers, and should, but it is physically impossible for him to make an absolute check-up. To a certain extent he must rely on them, and, oftener than they realize, his safety depends on how well they have done their work.

In the lion-horse act, the most important duty of my assistants is to see that the heavy wooden saddle on which the leaping lion lands is fastened securely. Only once, in my whole experience, have the boys failed to tighten up this odd saddle sufficiently, but that one slip caused me so much trouble I'm not likely ever to forget it.

I was breaking in a new lion-horse pair and was having more luck with them than I had ever had in the launching of so troublesome a stunt. In fact, things were moving along so smoothly I began to wonder if my lion wasn't a house-cat and my equine a hobby-horse. Then one day, with complete unexpectedness, everything went wrong—just when I thought my horse and lion were working so well together that it was only a matter of weeks before they would be ready to perform for an audience.

I had scheduled a rehearsal of the act. My lion—a big fellow I called Grunt for reasons that any one can guess, although his grunting always seemed harmless enough—leaped on the back of Mike, the horse he was working with. It was the first jump of this particular rehearsal, and a most disastrous one. As Grunt hit the wooden "table," it careened precipitately to the right, obviously because most of the lion's weight was on that side. Over went the saddle and over went Grunt.

Mike was close to the arena bars when the accident happened. He was both tough and resourceful.

Grunt, as he fell, landed between Mike and the arena bars. He lashed out at the horse, but before the great claws could accomplish anything, quick-witted Mike began to squeeze him against the bars! The arena shook as the heavy horse, half kneeling, pressed all his weight against the lion he had succeeded in wedging between himself and the steel uprights of the training ring.

Grunt roared his rage and struggled to get free. Mike's cumbersome saddle proved a serious handicap to the horse and the lion managed to shake himself loose. As he did, and prepared to spring at his seemingly harmless assailant, Mike started kicking the devil out of him!

Grunt, remembering that he was one of the great cats and that he could never live down a defeat at the hands—or should I say hoofs?—of a horse, sailed into Mike with a fury I've never seen surpassed. Belying all the good nature he had shown earlier, he bared his teeth and claws and let fly. The special multiple-ply canvas that up to now had provided horses with real protection in similar situations seemed like so much paper as Grunt attacked it. With a great gouging sweep his right forepaw tore a big gash in the canvas covering, the claws cruelly ripping the horse's hindquarters. Before Grunt could inflict any more punishment, I drove him off with my chair and a heavy club.

Mike, the best horse I had ever trained for this act, was through. No amount of coaxing could induce him to face a lion again, and my sympathies were with him. When I saw how he felt and knew that only unfair persuasion could make him change his mind, I let him off.

If it had not been for this unfortunate accident, he would have become one of the world's most spectacular performing horses. As it was, he became a beast of burden around the circus—and all because my assistants had failed to strap on his heavy wooden saddle securely.

I mention this without any unkind thoughts about the delinquent boys. I've made plenty of mistakes myself—errors of judgment and errors of omission which in the light of my present experience seem a bit absurd.

The public would be willing to pay almost anything per seat if it could see some of the things that happen in winter quarters. It is here that all new animals are broken and trained to perform; and it is here, therefore, that I have my greatest thrills. For accidents are an inevitable part of the business of training animals and far more of them happen during the training period than while I am putting my charges through their paces for the benefit of an audience.

After a while the experienced trainer resigns himself to accidents. He knows it is a waste of time to try to eliminate them entirely; instead, he tries to keep them at a minimum and protect his assistants and himself as much as possible. It would be as foolish to expect to be an animal-trainer and not be in hot water now and then as it would be for a man to take up aviation and actually look forward to an uneventful career.

Take, for instance, the task of the trainer whose assignment is to teach a tiger to ride an elephant. A sweet task, that. More than one trainer has had bones a plenty broken while attempting it; and one, to my knowledge, was killed. But it is a matter of record in the circus world that people like to see tigers ride elephants; so

trainers are put to work to do what they can about it. Several years ago I had such an assignment.

Surely it's unnecessary to state that tigers and elephants hate one another; but I'll state it anyhow for the benefit of the uninitiated. The mutual hatred of course adds to the trainer's troubles.

For the most part, the method employed in training for the elephant-and-tiger act is pretty much like that described earlier in this chapter—the training for the lion-horse act. The principles followed are basically the same. The main difference, as far as the actual job is concerned, is that in the case of the lion and horse the trainer is dealing with one really formidable beast, while in that of the elephant-tiger stunt he is dealing with two. And this, I need hardly say, doesn't make the work any easier.

Once I actually succeeded without too much agony in getting an elephant, Jojo, and a tiger, Jake, to learn this riding act. That is, they picked up the trick quickly and were doing it to perfection in less than a month after I got them started—which is almost a record.

Then something had to happen to spoil it all. It usually does when I get off to a very good start. I'm almost superstitious about animals that respond at once.

I was called away for two weeks and when I returned to winter quarters at Peru, Indiana, my elephant and tiger behaved, when I started rehearsing them again, as if they had never seen each other before. With the tiger's very first leap, I was in trouble. The elephant wriggled and squirmed and twisted until Jake's position became precarious and the uncomfortable tiger elected to jump rather than be thrown. As he landed on the arena floor, his old pal did his best to crush him

with his front legs—and almost succeeded. Jake, a lightning-fast tiger, just managed to escape death, but if Jojo's timing had been better, my striped cat, despite all his speed, would not have had a chance.

Jake didn't understand why Jojo should want to pancake him. He had treated the elephant well, on the whole, and he felt he had a grievance. He made a leap for Jojo's right hind leg and dug away with his teeth, at the same time bringing his claws into play with unmistakable purpose. He was out to mess up that elephant and he made no effort to conceal his feelings. The condition of Jojo's leg about three seconds after Jake got busy was all the proof I needed that my tiger was on a rampage.

Swinging his trunk madly and trumpeting wildly, Jojo tried to shake off the striped nuisance. Lowering his head, he charged straight for the steel bars of the arena, sundering them like so much peanut brittle. In his mad rush, he carried three sections of the arena with him, opening up a gap of about fifteen feet as he plunged through—only to be taken into custody less than a minute later by vigilant keepers standing ready with elephant-hooks.

However, Jojo had accomplished his main purpose, which was to shake off the tiger. This he had done neatly and effectually in his crazy dive through the arena walls. Jake was brushed off as though he were so much house-cat.

I had taken up my position in the gap made by the elephant. What a grand opening for a tiger that wanted to escape! Jake realized the possibilities a fraction of a second after I did. He came tearing at me, but I turned him with a blaze of fire from my flash-gun. As

I pulled the trigger, I yelled to the attendant at the tunnel to rattle the metal door leading out of the arena. He obeyed, and Jake, seeing that I meant business, turned and made for the chute and in thirty seconds or so was inside his cage where he couldn't make any more trouble that afternoon—the reason being that I called it a day and no one on earth could have induced me to look at a tiger or an elephant again till the morrow came. And I wasn't any too eager then, either.

Jojo wasn't through making trouble for me. He had other plans and he put them into effect a few days later, when I decided to give him another workout. My idea was merely to trot him around the arena a few times, a psychological test designed to show whether he had any unhappy memories of the accident a few days before. I wanted to be sure, in other words, that he could be made to enter an arena without wanting to tear it to pieces.

I figured that Jojo might need a little supervision at this stage of the game, so I accompanied his keeper to the elephant-house. Having paid my respects to Jake in the cat-barn a few minutes before (I wanted to see how the tiger was behaving, and was pleased to find him snoozing peacefully as if nothing had happened), it was only fair that I should now make a formal call on Jojo.

Jojo, like Jake, seemed to have forgotten the experience that I feared might still be affecting his nerves. Sleeping sickness must have been the ailment of the day in winter quarters, for instead of a troubled, pettish elephant, I came upon one that was half dozing in his tracks. As he sleepily followed us out of the elephant-

house he certainly didn't look as if there were any reason to worry about him.

However, the second we reached the open, he whirled and with a well-aimed, meaningful blow of his trunk, knocked me flat. A man says his prayers better on his knees, I'm told, than any other way; but I managed to say mine on my back as Jojo, his great neck arched and his trunk curled, bent forward, and, driving straight toward me with his tusks, strove to impale me!

But I didn't spend all my time praying. Quickly rolling over on my side, I escaped the thrust. I could say that I judged my distance with accuracy born of desperation, but I might also add that I was pretty lucky. Regardless of how much skill you employ, you can't escape a thrust like that without the gods of good fortune on your side.

But my escape was only temporary. There I was, flat on the ground, imprisoned between two ivory tusks! If Jojo's brain had been functioning properly, he could have erased me without any difficulty. He kept me there on the ground in this weird position for five or six seconds, while an attendant futilely tried to beat him off.

Even in my bewildered state, I knew what was coming. Those precious seconds helped clear my brain and make me see the obvious. The elephant would rise again, and again try to drive his tusks through me. As he drew himself up, I grabbed a tusk with each hand and held on with all the strength I could summon.

The elephant lifted me and pushed me down again, time after time, but I held on to his tusks, and, performing various contortions that would have made the pro-

fessionals in our show jealous, managed to keep from being impaled. I held on beautifully, but I don't deserve all the credit. In fairness, I should bestow some of that, or most of it, upon the mud in the lot. For the ground was soupily muddy and all that Jojo managed to do with each thrust was to push me deeper and deeper into the slimy ooze.

The menagerie workers, headed by "Cheerful" Gardner, the elephant boss, heard the commotion (they tell me I was undignified enough to yell frantically a few times) and came running to my rescue. Each of them putting an elephant-hook into play, together they succeeded in discouraging Jojo in his ambition to turn killer. They drove him off and got him back into his pen.

Then Cheerful lifted me out of the mud. I was suffering from shock and I was glad of the opportunity to stretch out in the slime and relax now that the crisis was over. Cheerful grabbed my hand and swung me to my feet.

"Well, Clyde," he began, "what was the big idea?"

"What do you mean?" I asked, still befuddled.

"What were you trying to do to Jojo?" he demanded.

"What was I trying to do?" I repeated. I was in a fog and I think I didn't remember what I had been trying to do! I don't believe I actually saw Cheerful—a film had come over my eyes as I started to relax—but his voice comes back to me now, though not his exact words, as he spat out a series of jerky questions, something like this: "What were you doing with Jojo? What happened? How did he get you down? Why the devil are you staring at me? What makes your eyes look so crazy?"

I didn't attempt to answer all those questions. I had been through too much. I simply said: "I was leading him out—his keeper and I. We were getting him ready for a workout in the arena."

"And he attacked without warning?" asked the puzzled Cheerful.

I nodded. I recall that as my head began to clear, another question came, something like this: "Where were you before you went to the elephant-house?"

"In the cat-barn, calling on that tiger Jake."

"In the cat-barn!" He started. "And you don't know what was wrong?"

I was too weary to defend myself.

"You smelled of tigers," said Cheerful in disgust. "When will you young trainers learn?"

Of course Cheerful was right. I must have smelled of tigers. And how much I learned from his look of disgust! One of the things I absorbed that day was that the trainer who goes near an elephant after visiting the cat-barn is looking for trouble. I half knew this all along, but not until Jojo nearly killed me did I act on it properly.

Two months later, I had a tiger riding an elephant—a smooth-working act with very little grief attached. But the tiger wasn't Jake and the elephant wasn't Jojo. It had been necessary to start all over again and break in a new pair.

And now, I'll tell you all about the famous old trick in which the trainer "puts his head into the lion's mouth." I use quotation marks, for, to my knowledge, no trainer has ever actually performed any such trick. I've known some pretty reckless trainers, but I've never

known or heard of one crazy enough to stick his *head* inside the mouth of a maned cat.

What the trainer does who is supposed to perform this feat—and I have done it scores of times, and have been acclaimed as the man “who puts his head into a lion’s mouth”—is to put his *face* between the open jaws of the animal. First, however, certain precautions are taken. The trainer’s right hand rests securely on the lion’s upper jaw and his left hand holds the lower jaw firmly. The second the trainer feels the slightest pressure on either hand indicative of a possible clamping together of the jaws, he withdraws his frontal features—not his head, for his head, remember, has never actually been inside the jaws—and only on rare occasions does anything happen to him. I do not know of a single instance of a trainer’s being seriously injured during the performance of this trick.

Personally, I dislike the “head-in-the-mouth” stunt. There are a few trainers who still use it—good trainers, too—and I am not criticizing them when I say I do not like the head-in-the-mouth business. No one will deny that these trainers are entitled to their opinion on the merits of the trick as much as I am to mine. Perhaps the reason why I dislike the stunt so much is that, more than any other trick of animal-training, it has become the basis for the weirdest of yarns. So overwhelming a percentage of what happens in the big cage is genuine that it is only natural I should not be keen about a stunt that has given rise to a legendry that would tax the credulity of the most gullible.

In this connection I am reminded of a former animal-trainer, a European who performed creditably on the Continent. While lecturing in this country he told per-

fectly preposterous stories, which he featured as the main part of his lecture, about the head-in-the-mouth stunt. He even told tales of trainers whose heads had been snapped off while they were performing the prodigious feat. Encouraged by misguided admirers, he told taller and taller tales, until he was finally branded as a faker. Yet he was an authentic trainer who had risked his life in the arena for many years. His imagination had gotten the better of him and he had succeeded in discrediting himself and the interesting but unimportant stunt he was trying to glorify.

Any one who is honest about animal-training will admit that the trick in question can be worked only by stacking the cards. Only a lion that is almost freakishly tame can be used. The trick is one that hardly justifies the effort of finding such an animal, for, curiously enough, it is not popular. "Spotters" in circus audiences report that most people seeing the head-in-the-mouth stunt believe that the lion is toothless. Those who can see the teeth, question their genuineness and hint that perhaps there's a way of outfitting an animal with false teeth! No one, apparently, ever doubts that the trainer's head is actually inside the lion's mouth—which it never is.

And now I'll be even franker. Two of the things that turned me against the so-called head-in-the-mouth stunt are these: First, the trick is tame in comparison with any one of a number of high lights that feature a big modern act—my present one, if I may be immodest enough to call attention to it, in which I put forty lions and tigers through their paces—and, secondly . . .

But I'm afraid my second reason will prove a terrific anticlimax. If it does, I'm sorry. In the name of honesty

—and the purpose of this book is to give the public the real low-down on my job—I must confess that an unpleasant feature of the head-in-the-mouth business is that most lions, even the healthiest ones, have halitosis! I can think of nothing more definitely suffocating than the breath of the average lion. Garlic is perfume in comparison. To say that the animal-trainer who performs this feat is often met, as the lion opens his mouth, with an odor that is foul and nauseating, is putting it mildly.

I do not mean to say that all lions suffer from acute halitosis. This would be unfair. A number of the lions in my act are only mildly afflicted. However, if you plan to stick your face into a lion's mouth, you may as well expect to be gassed to some extent. It's a bit too close for comfort; and as audiences would be sure to misunderstand if a trainer wore a gas-mask, it is best, on the whole, for us to give up this head-in-the-mouth business entirely. At least, that's how I feel about it.

Lions are always dangerous. You never know when they are going to revert to type, even the sissies selected for head-in-the-mouth work. Why toy with a stunt that involves this risk as well as the unpleasantness of being subjected to super-halitosis? This is more than a joke. A bad odor coming from an animal's mouth is capable of momentarily weakening a man's resistance.

Have you ever seen a leopard or a puma walk a tight-rope? Or a lion or a tiger? Most lions and tigers are too heavy for this work, although I've taught the trick to two or three representatives of each of these species. In the main, though, it is work for leopards and pumas.

I'll begin by making the admission that the so-called

"tight-rope" isn't really a tight-rope. It is a strip of tough, tested hickory to which rope has been nailed on either side. However, I do not feel especially apologetic about making this admission, for it is something of a feat to teach a wild animal to walk across even this broadened version of the tight-rope.

In the first stages, the animal's job is not very difficult. His assignment then is to walk across a board six inches wide that is elevated only two feet. This board is attached to low pedestals about fifteen feet apart.

Many cats are natural balancers, so I don't claim much as a teacher of equilibrium-maintenance. The really difficult work in the case of such animals is to make them understand that you want them to walk across the board. This is a genuine feat of cueing, much of it in the realm of the intangible and the inexplicable. A movement of the arm, a delicate flick of a light whip, a swaying of my body, and sometimes a few soft whistles, and lo and behold! my leopard or puma—it is usually one of these two—is up on the pedestal and moving across the board toward the other pedestal.

I'm not sure, myself, how it's done. I'm usually as surprised as any one when the stunt clicks for the first time. Sometimes, I believe—sh! don't tell!—that we animal-trainers are just assertive devils who decide to make wild animals do certain things and bluff 'em into responding to our commands; when, if they only knew their real strength, determined rebellion would wipe out most of us. But if you know any lions or tigers or leopards or pumas, please don't tell 'em, will you?

Once my cat succeeds in walking the six-inch board with regularity, I start him on a four-inch board. Then I cut the width down to two inches. Good old resilient

hickory is the wood I always use. It has a way of giving without snapping. Experience has taught me how to choose my hickory, and I have developed a real knack for recognizing the most pliable kind, with the result that I have never had the humiliation of having a piece of it crack under the legs of one of my feline balancers.

Two-inch hickory is the narrowest I can safely use. It is to the sides of this wood that the rope is nailed for the "tight-rope" act.

By the time the two-inch stage is reached, I should add, the height of the rope is increased to six or seven feet.

Early in my career—when I was with Howe's Great London Circus—I was assisting a trainer who was teaching a leopard to walk the tight-rope. My boss, instead of working the stunt in the center of the ring, from pedestal to pedestal, hooked his tight-rope, so-called, from one of the bars of the arena straight to another bar about twelve feet across, cutting off a section of the circular arena and making of it a sort of elliptic space inside of which I was required to stand. My job was to watch there, stick in hand, and discourage the tight-rope walker whenever he showed any signs of jumping from his ticklish perch.

The first time the animal was sent across the "rope" he behaved himself, and my boss and I thought we weren't going to have any trouble with him. Then the leopard (a fairly large spotted cat), after walking the first half of the rope with an almost smug calm, decided to prove—as if I weren't aware of it!—the orneriness of his ornery species. With complete suddenness he jumped from his hickory roost, straight at me! This

was rather absurd, when you think about it, for there I was minding my own business; but I guess he didn't like my looks. At any rate, he made straight for me and might have messed me up if I hadn't been on guard. You see, even in these early days I didn't trust cats, and I ducked with a nice sense of timing as the speckled foe violated the sanctity of the near-ellipse in which I stood. I lost no time in seeking the wide open spaces of the main arena.

I don't mind adding, in a hushed whisper, that in the light of my subsequent experience, I believe the trainer who let me stand in that cut-off space (it was little better than a trap) in which a vicious leopard might land any second, was a fool or a villain. I prefer to think of him as a fool. Had the leopard gaged his leap properly, I should not have had a chance.

Not long afterward I was asked to take over this trainer's job. I resigned in preference to supplanting him. I know now what a rascal he was, for he regularly assigned me to tasks that to-day I realize were almost suicidal. Without knowing why, I preferred being temporarily without work to taking over the job of this man who, when he wasn't giving me insane assignments, was terrifically busy whining about his responsibilities. I didn't realize then that he was beefing, but I do now, and I also realize that more than once he tried to blot me out. Luck, plus an instinctive gift for protecting myself, is all that saved me. The old buzzard, I know now—and so do all those who were associated with him at the time—could have cheerfully slain any one who seemed at all likely ever to supplant him. Really great animal-trainers realize that one day they

## THE BIG CAGE

are going to slow up and it will be necessary to find some one capable of taking over the job. Most of the outstanding trainers of the past have helped develop new men. Often the second-raters not only discourage this practice but give new-comers assignments that mean needless danger and sometimes even death.

Several years ago I had an act performed with five leopards and five pumas. The management kept demanding new thrills and I finally worked out a stunt that involved a leopard's springing on my back from a pedestal ten feet high to where I stood, about fifteen feet away. The animal I trained for this trick was Dixie, one of the nimbler-witted of my spotted cats.

I started by cueing Dixie to jump from the ten-foot pedestal to a slightly lower one, with a broad padded top. Then I cued her to leap from this high seat to one with a still smaller top. This new pedestal reached to my shoulders, the height to which I wanted to accustom Dixie. In the trick, as planned, I would turn my back on her and stoop over slightly and she would leap for me, landing with a front paw on each shoulder. I would grab these forefeet as she landed, to keep her poised on my back.

In the early days of this trick, I wore a heavy turtle-neck sweater that protected my neck, and over the sweater a leather coat with a high collar. Before very long I had Dixie working so that time after time she made a neat landing on my back. In fact, she was performing so zestfully I couldn't help feeling she was thoroughly enjoying herself. Not a few animals, as I have said elsewhere, get real pleasure out of their arena work. With the movement of my back, which was

Dixie's cue to jump, this animal regularly leaped into action with a positively happy abandon.

One day, about a week before Dixie was to perform her trick before an audience for the first time, we were having a rehearsal of what I expected would prove sure-fire stuff with circus audiences. The fans are always ready to applaud so spectacular and dangerous a feat. It is obvious even to the children in an audience that the trainer in such a case is taking real chances.

The attendants set the arena, and Dixie and I prepared to go through our routine. She fairly bounded up the graduated pedestals, forming a sort of arena stairway, that led to her ten-foot perch. I walked off to my post in the center of the ring and turned my back on Dixie as I had done dozens of times before. Then I bent over slightly and gave the movement of my back that was her cue. She jumped, but misjudged her distance, and landed a bit short. As she struggled frantically to keep from sliding off my back, which she had barely reached, I grabbed quickly for her slipping paws and just managed to reach them. In my frenzied effort to keep her on my back (I knew that an unhappy experience at this stage of the game would affect her future work and set me back weeks) I gripped her paws too hard. In some way or other I had let go of the right paw. Holding on mainly with her hind claws, which by now were well embedded in my leather coat, she swung around with her right paw and just succeeded in reaching my right eyebrow and the side of my nose. At the same time she managed somehow to find the back of my neck with her teeth, though, luckily for me, she was not poised for a real bite.

When attendants drove Dixie off with prods, I

started taking inventory of my injuries. My right eye was full of blood, and, not knowing the true nature of the injury, I quite naturally thought I was going to lose the eye. The ripped eyebrow smarted and in my panic—I'll admit I was panicky—I imagined myself losing the sight of the eye. Such is the power of suggestion that as I clapped my hand over my left eye, I was sure the right was fading fast. As a matter of fact, it was full of blood and a suffused eye doesn't help a man's vision. When the doctor turned up a few minutes later, he found that the eyeball had not been injured or even touched.

The injury to my nose wasn't serious, either, but to this very day a red streak shows there in cold weather, where Dixie slashed me. And when the hair on the back of my head is pushed up, the scar left by the leopard's teeth can be seen. This injury, too, proved minor, although it might easily have been fatal if the animal had been set for a real attack.

All things considered, I was pretty lucky. The really unfortunate part of the whole experience was that it resulted in a definite setback for Dixie as a performer. I nursed her along until she was doing her leaping act before audiences, but she never once performed before a crowd with the spirit she showed in rehearsal before the accident.

Putting an animal over a hurdle is a trick that circus audiences have endorsed for years. When the animal is one of the great cats the enthusiasm is especially great, manifesting itself in loud applause.

An eight-foot hurdle is the tallest I have ever used.

This is not much of a jump for a lion or a tiger. Teaching the animal to understand what you want him to do is much more of a feat.

In fairness to the trainer I might add that the trick is not impressive unless the animal used in it is a big, powerful specimen, and that is what usually makes the trouble. Persuading five hundred pounds of lion or tiger to go over a hurdle is no simple matter, merely because in trying to make an animal of this size do anything, the trainer is taking a real chance.

The first rule the trainer observes is not to attempt to put a wild animal—even a small one—over a *solid* hurdle. The dumbest animals have a basic protective cunning, and before they can be taught a trick, they want some way of gaging the possibilities. In the hurdle trick, therefore, a barrier is used through which the performer can see what is on the other side.

A serious hurdle accident (which I shall not discuss here) was traceable to an inexperienced trainer who did not seem to realize that a spirited animal is a positive menace the second you try to force him over a “blind” hurdle. Only a “push-over” beast will jump a barrier through which he cannot see, and as those that come under this classification are almost without exception dull and spiritless, there is nothing to be gained by using them in an act.

The public pays to see peppy animals, ones that respond electrically to the “arm cue” the trainer uses in putting them over a hurdle.

Don’t think I’m going to continue this way indefinitely. Some of my readers have probably made enough notes by this time to know just how to go about the

business of supplanting me. In other words, perhaps I have started a new flock of animal-trainers on their dubious careers. I hope not. Animal-training is hard work—and in the beginning you don't get much more, in the way of compensation, than your keep.

### III

#### *Mixing Lions and Tigers*

THE principal reason why my act is a success is that I mix lions and tigers on a big scale. As these species are natural enemies, I have real conflict at the outset. This conflict is increased by reason of the fact that, in addition to mixing the species, I mix the sexes. My act enlists the services of forty lions and tigers, males and females (illness, fights, and the contingencies of breeding sometimes temporarily reduce the total), and this amounts to a virtual guarantee of a fighting act.

Most "great cat" acts of the past featured either lions or tigers, usually all males. This simplified the trainer's task considerably. By using only one species and having all the performers of one sex, the trainer saved himself many headaches. He avoided, for one thing, the hazards attendant upon breaking up fights between males who in a mixed act are more than willing to do battle over a particular female that strikes their fancy.

The one-sex, one-species cat acts of the past no longer mean a great deal to audiences. There is little conflict, and the animals perform perfunctorily and without much spirit. They do their stuff, but they do it in such routine fashion that the spectators should be pardoned for yawning now and then. Not many of these acts are left, and in a few years they will entirely cease to be.

This is not said in disparagement of the trainers in charge of these surviving "still" acts. I have nothing but respect for them, and as a trainer I realize their ability and appreciate their work more than audiences do. But circus-goers have decreed that animal acts be fighting acts, and the only way to meet the demand is to mix warring species, and to complicate matters further by mixing the sexes.

It has been written more than once that I am the only trainer who has ever mixed lions and tigers. This is not so. Herman Weedon, a great trainer of about thirty-five years ago, used a tiger in a nine-animal act that also included three lions. (The rest of the group consisted of three bears—a brown, a Tibet, and a sloth—a Silesian boarhound, and a hyena.)

There are other instances of trainers of the past having mixed lions and tigers, but there is no record of the mixing ever having been done on a big scale. I do not believe any one will deny that in mixing forty lions and tigers I have gone far beyond what has been done in this field in the past.

Early in my career as a trainer, I realized that if I wanted to make a real impression, I should have to do something that had never been done before. There was no sense in repeating what other trainers had done. I had no particular ambition to shoot past any one else, but I did have a keen desire to make a decent living in my chosen field; and it soon became plain that I must do something completely new and different. I also wanted to evolve an act so dangerous that I should not have to worry about being supplanted by some other trainer who was willing to work for a few dollars a week less. I'd seen trainers who had the same bag of

tricks at the mercy of one another's current financial situation, and I set out to develop the riskiest act possible—an act so dangerous that no one would want to fill in for me if offered twice my salary.

Some years ago, when I was with the John Robinson Show, I acted as assistant to Pete Taylor, one of the ablest trainers this country has ever seen. In addition to being a fine trainer, he was a skilful teacher; and, unlike some of the older trainers I've met, he was always willing to give pointers to a comparative beginner like me. The soul of patience, he would stand by hour after hour until I was doing the thing he was teaching me, in the manner he felt it should be done. Even when I got my animal to respond to the cue I gave, if Taylor thought I showed the slightest flaw in "form" he would make me give the cue over and over again until his artistic eye was satisfied.

Taylor was one of the first men to mix lions and tigers in an American circus. He was also the first man to point out to me that the "one-species, one-sex" animal act was doing a fade-out. "If you want to get anywhere in this game, Clyde," he told me more than once, "you'll have to learn how to make lions and tigers perform in the same arena. And you'll have to go beyond what I've done, and do it on a very big scale."

Taylor's act consisted of ten lions and four tigers. His plans for the further development of the act involved the addition of more tigers, to give the act a better balance. But an unkind fate stepped in and messed up Taylor's plans. Suddenly one day he suffered a bad nervous breakdown, the type that usually means the end of a trainer's career.

These collapses constitute one of the great mysteries of animal-training. Oftener than not, there are no outward indications that such a breakdown is about to take place. It just happens, and when it does the nerves of the man afflicted are so badly shattered that it is pathetic to watch his efforts to rally his confidence and restore himself as a trainer. He may have as much courage as ever, but something has snapped and all kinds of mental hazards develop. I recall the case of a young trainer—we'll call him Russ Penny—who developed so bad a case of "arena shell-shock" that he would wake up in a cold sweat in the middle of the night and imagine himself fighting off animals in an arena. After a year or two he calmed down and resumed his work, but the vital spark was gone and he lapsed back into the life of a third-rate trainer who worked with a small and not particularly dangerous group. But Penny's case was unusual. Normally a breakdown of this kind comes to a much older man who has been a trainer for years, as in the case of Taylor.

Poor Pete collapsed in the safety-cage one day as he was about to enter the arena to perform in a matinée. I picked him up and carried him out. He was in bad shape and his performance was called off. He never performed again, which was a pity, for his act was an excellent one. It was spirited from start to finish and was cleverly designed to give the spectator an idea of the ferocity of lions and tigers. His animals fought him all the way, but always he would make them do his bidding.

Pete was our star and I was the show's second-string trainer in addition to being his general assistant. I

worked two acts that were subordinated in the billing—and rightly so—to Pete's spectacular lion-tiger act, which had much greater drawing power than the two "prelim" acts I worked—one an all-bear act and the other a "mixed group" consisting of four leopards, two pumas, three hyenas, two Russian bears, two Tibet bears, one polar bear, and two lionesses. They were good entertaining acts, but they lacked the fire of an all lion-tiger group.

Late that afternoon, I was astonished when the management asked me to go on for Taylor at night. After much painstaking and skilful coaching, Taylor had brought me to the point where I had managed three or four times to put his lions and tigers through a full rehearsal that took in the whole routine. But I had never worked them before an audience. I was glad of the opportunity, although it meant working three acts that night. There was no one available to take the other two acts off my hands. The management agreed to relieve me of these "prelim" groups if I made good with Taylor's act.

I went on that night and was lucky enough to get by. Taylor, a great believer in the fundamentals, had grounded me properly in all the essentials of cueing, footwork, etc., and I put the animals through their paces without a mishap. I had only one bad moment. A lion anticipated his cue by a full second and came tearing at me where I stood in the center of the arena. I was forced to give ground and as I started backing away he knocked the chair out of my hand with a slash of the paw. I had to empty all the chambers of my blank-cartridge pistol to keep him off me, but I succeeded in

driving him back to his pedestal, and after that I had no trouble making him take the hurdle that he leaped regularly at this point in the act.

A few days later I was officially installed as Taylor's successor. In about ten days I was able to turn the other two acts over to an old veteran of the arena who quickly learned the peculiarities of the different animals. He had no trouble making them do their stunts, with all of which he was familiar.

Taking over Taylor's act was a real step forward, but I should have been happier about it if my kind-hearted mentor had not wound up his career so tragically. Three men taught me most of what I know about animal-training—Pete Taylor, Bobby McPherson, and Chubby Gilfoyle—and I always think of them as the three truest arena friends I've ever had. All accomplished trainers, they combined their skill as showmen with that rare ability to teach green youngsters like myself the various complicated tricks of the game. While I had a natural knack for handling wild animals, I doubt whether I should have gone very far if I had not been properly schooled in the methods of these three gentlemen.

In 1926, I added six lions and tigers to the act I inherited from Taylor. This gave me a group of twenty-two. Now, if ever, I had a real job on my hands. Sudan, a new tiger, was even more than normally bitter against the race of lions—a fact that was evident long before he met any of the maned foe in the arena. He tried to maul the lion on his right and the one on his left through the side bars of our "cage row," in which lions and tigers are placed in one long cage partitioned off by bars, the

object of the openwork partitioning being to give the warring species a chance to become acquainted. The lions had even less use for Sudan than he had for them and his section of cage was soon a storm-center.

First I worked Sudan alone, getting him used to the arena. When I got him pedestal-broken, I taught him to pick up the cues that sent him from one pedestal to another. When he was smoothly handling these basic assignments, I decided to try him out in the training ring with the other tigers. He behaved as if he were unaware of them and they ignored him as completely.

The next step was to add the lions to the tiger group of which Sudan was now a part. This of course was the real test. Naturally, I expected to have my hands full, but by now I was growing used to bringing warring cats together and a fair amount of success had given me considerable confidence.

I pedestaled all the lions and tigers, including Sudan, without mishap. But when I tried to get the new tiger to move from the pedestal on which he was seated to another one, he refused to budge. Five times in succession I cued him to leave his seat for a near-by one, but he could not be made to move an inch. Intently eying the lions around him, he kept his perch as if riveted to it.

I then resorted to an old trick which I believed would give Sudan confidence. I proceeded to "fight" the lions. Cracking my whip with unusual vehemence, I went from lion to lion, poking my chair close to their faces for added effect. The idea was to make Sudan feel that I had lined up with him against his maned foes. After I had "fought" the lions for two or three minutes, I went back to work on the new tiger. Standing between him

and the enemy cats, I succeeded, after a whole series of coaxing cues, to get him to leave his pedestal for another one that was close by. When he had done this without being attacked, he seemed to acquire confidence. While he continued to eye the lions with an undiminished intentness, he was plainly less nervous. He was beginning to relax, in other words.

In a week Sudan was acting like a veteran performer. This delighted me because the animal was a handsome specimen, and a trainer is always happy when he succeeds in making a good-looking addition to his group. Seedy-looking animals, regardless of how responsive they are to cues, never help an act. Big, husky, attractive, vicious specimens are what people pay to see in the arena.

I was so pleased with the way my augmented act was going that I decided it was time Danny Odom, our manager, looked it over. Danny had more than once expressed a desire to have a look at the new arrangement, but I had discouraged him, saying I was not yet ready for him. Now, I informed him, I was ready for his critical eye. Would he be kind enough to look over the new Clyde Beatty lion-tiger ensemble?

Odom turned up at the appointed hour and even applauded—an unusual thing for a case-hardened circus-manager to do—as I put the cats through the early stages of my act. Danny was a pretty good kidder and I suspect there was more than a slight element of joshing in his applause. It was too vociferous to be real. It had an undercurrent that somehow said to me, "You've gotten past the preliminaries; now show some real stuff."

Well, I sailed past the preliminaries and the middle

of the act, and I got well into the concluding minutes. Everything was moving along so smoothly I could hardly believe it. I pyramided my beasts, and, if I say so myself, it was a beautiful sight. There they were, all my lions and tigers, ranged around the arena on pedestals of different heights.

I was about to "break" the pyramid and cue my tigers, the first to depart in this act, to leave the arena, when Cæsar, one of my huskiest lions, struck at a tiger. I dashed over and cracked my whip inches from his nose, the idea being to get the big fellow's mind off the tiger and on me.

While I was correcting Cæsar's impulses, his brother Prince, who sat directly behind Sudan—and what trouble lion brothers can make!—decided to uphold the family honor by taking a smack at the new tiger I had managed, after so much effort, to place in the act.

A well-aimed blow of the paw sent Sudan, who was not expecting an attack at this late stage of the act, toppling off his pedestal onto the floor. As he fell, Prince jumped on him. In a fraction of a second the two cats, locked together on the arena floor, were struggling for an advantage. Sudan, summoning every ounce of strength in his powerful body, shook himself free with a great wrench, and, his eyes blazing with murderous intent, was poising himself to tear into his assailant when Cæsar came bounding over to help his brother. Lions always "gang up" in a fight, and this is doubly true of brothers. Tigers, on the other hand, fight alone.

Sudan was a real fighter and could have held his own against either Prince or Cæsar. The two lions were too much for him. In no time at all the brothers were viciously biting and clawing him, and though the stout-

hearted tiger continued to fight, he didn't have a chance.

I yelled to the boy at the tunnel to rattle the iron door leading to the chute and the individual cages. This was the standard cue for the animals to leave the arena. Three tigers got out in safety. A fourth was about to leave—a Bengal tigress—when a lioness jumped on her. Lions jumped down from their pedestals to help—and soon I had a free-for-all in the arena involving every one of my lions and two tigers (Sudan and the striped cat that had almost got out).

I blanked away furiously with my gun and poked at the combatants with a heavy pole, but in vain. The struggling beasts showed no signs of realizing I was on earth, much less in the same arena with them.

The tigress put up a magnificent battle. Fighting herself free, she made for the open tunnel door, her hind quarters bleeding freely. She reached the door in safety and it slammed shut as a lion was about to make another lunge for her bloody hind parts—a lion whose shoulder she had badly ripped.

All the lions now concentrated on Sudan. This would have meant certain death for my new tiger. As I have said, he was a great fighter, but he was badly outnumbered. As the free-for-all got under way, I had yelled to one of the attendants to turn our big fire hose on the lions. This he did as Sudan, completely surrounded by lions, was preparing to make a last hopeless stand. One after another, the maned beasts choked and wheezed as the heavy stream of water, aimed full at the mouth, made them lose breath momentarily. Sudan, who had had enough, saw his chance and left the arena.

Once the tiger was well on his way to his cage, with a metal door between him and his foes, I got busy driv-

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ing the lions out. It was not difficult to get the water-soaked, bewildered, breathless cats back to their cages.

Manager Odom didn't think much of the show I had put on, and frankly said so. However, patience and kindness were well represented in this first-rate showman's character and he gave me another chance to show what I could do.

Three weeks later, I had this same group of cats working harmoniously—harmoniously for cats, I should say—and Manager Odom was pleased.

I found it hard to forgive Prince for wasting three weeks of my time, but forgive him I did. The trainer who bothered to nurse grievances against his animals would have little time left for anything else. For virtually every animal causes trouble sooner or later.

In 1927, I acquired eight lions and tigers that Trainer Bobby McPherson, one of the soundest men that ever bossed an arena, had been working in another show. The plan was to add these cats to my act, one at a time. The trainers affiliated with another show that was sharing our winter quarters declared that my plan to add these eight cats to my group of twenty-two lions and tigers amounted to insanity. "It can't be done," said one of them, with finality. "How the devil do you expect to work thirty cats in a thirty-two-foot arena? You'd be clawed up before you got a chance to turn around."

Nevertheless, McPherson agreed with me that it could be done. "It's going to be a strenuous job," he said, "but you can do it if you give yourself plenty of time. I'll give you the low-down on these eight cats of mine. They're all tough guys, especially Fang, but they can be handled."

Then he ran his group into the arena and for an hour he stood with me outside the bars, detailing the record of each and every member of the group. All of them, at one time or another, had caused trouble. Fang had consistently proved himself the villain of the lot. One day, while the show was playing in a town in Arkansas, this tiger made a sudden leap for McPherson's head from a ground seat. The top of the trainer's skull was badly clawed. A man with less hair might have been fatally injured. His left arm also was clawed.

How McPherson fought off the tiger, literally pushing the animal away from him, has become a part of the history of modern animal-training. I know of no greater single feat of bravery in the arena. Until he shook himself free and grabbed a chair, Bobby was actually engaged in a barehanded fight with five hundred pounds of vicious tiger. His gun had fallen from his hand when the animal so suddenly attacked, and he was without a means of defense for about ten seconds. This may not seem long to you, but it can be a whole lifetime in the arena.

Once Bobby had his chair—and no one ever handled a chair more skilfully—he was able to maneuver his way to the fallen pistol and pick it up. Weak from his two wounds, he just managed to make the safety-cage. Attendants on the outside of the arena frantically poked at the tiger with long prods, but their efforts didn't help much, for Fang was one of those animals which are unimpressed by prods. McPherson got out mainly through his own resourcefulness. He had hardly reached the safety-cage when he collapsed. Assistants dragged him out and sent for a doctor, who said that if the animal had struck a bit lower, he probably would have had

Bobby squarely by the back of the neck and that might have meant death.

One by one, I added McPherson's group to my act. It was a tough, back-breaking job, featured by plenty of setbacks, but I kept at it; and after several weeks of steady plugging I had an act that consisted of thirty lions and tigers that responded to my cueing. The Doubting Thomases conceded that I had gone beyond what they considered possible, but predicted that I'd soon find out I had undertaken too much and be forced to reduce my group.

Instead, I made plans to augment it. After working the enlarged act with success for a year, I decided to add two more tigers. I launched this plan in winter quarters, early in 1928. Again the Doubting Thomases tried to discourage me, but I felt confident I could work a group of thirty-two and perhaps more.

Again I had my hands full; but this was nothing new to me. The chap who expects to find animal-training easy work is in the wrong business. I was clawed and bitten three times before I managed to merge the two new tigers with the group of thirty, but I finally reached the point where I had the thirty-two cats responding to my cues with a fair amount of smoothness. A fair amount is all I expect. Always bear in mind that lions and tigers are foes and that fights break out inevitably in a mixed group of this kind. The practical trainer does not hope to prevent such fights; he is satisfied if he can break them up before they go too far.

This group of thirty-two cats was by a good margin the biggest group of lions and tigers that had ever performed together in an arena. It was so announced by the

management of the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus, which gave the act "top billing" all over the country, and no one challenged the statement. One trainer, however, arose to voice publicly the familiar sentiment that I could not continue to work so big a lion-tiger act indefinitely. "Beatty announces his thirty-two animal act," was his parting shot, "but he'll have to cut down the total. Then, long after he has stopped using so many cats, he'll still get credit for working thirty-two." A nice friendly fellow, that.

The year 1929 found me giving two performances a day with my thirty-two lions and tigers. The going was never easy and sometimes it was mighty hard. I'll admit that more than once, after just managing to slip out of a perilous situation, I thought seriously of cutting down the act. Then I would have a good day and abandon the idea.

The high light of 1929—and an experience that comes close to being the greatest thrill of my life—took place when we were playing at Collingsville, Pennsylvania. This dramatic happening has since become known around our show as the Battle of Collingsville.

My animals had behaved well for five successive performances, and I was anticipating no trouble—that is, nothing out of the ordinary—when we reached this Pennsylvania town. All went well during the afternoon performance, but the evening performance saw my act pretty nearly wrecked.

It was then my regular practice, in getting things under way, to start by letting three tigers into the arena. They were trained to take the three high pedestals that later on became the top of the pyramid I formed with

my feline actors and actresses. Then I sent the lions in—twenty males and females—holding back the rest of the tigers until their enemies were seated.

My lions always mill around on the floor until I make my entrance. Some of the males seek out the females and other males come along to dispute their claims. There is a throng of lions about the safety-cage where I stand, armed with chair, gun, and whip, ready to fight my way into the arena.

As I stood peering out of the safety-cage that day in Collinsville, one of the lions leaped high up without warning and dragged Rosie, "the roll-over tiger," down from her lofty seat. (Rosie was one of the pyramid-topping tigers mentioned above. At the time the other two were Rajah and Empress.)

As Rosie landed on the floor, lions started after her, but she fought herself free before any one of them could secure a real hold, and scrambled back to her perch. She was just getting seated as I made my entrance. Cracking my whip and blazing away with my gun, I quickly got the lions up on their pedestals. Then I let in the rest of the tigers and seated them.

When this is done, and all my cats are ranged around the arena, I have formed the living pyramid that features the first part of my act.

I had hardly pyramided the group when Snip, a tigress, jumped off her pedestal and ran to the tunnel door, which was locked. The other animals held the formation (they had not yet received the cue to break it up) while I ran over to where Snip was pawing at the closed door. I drove her away from the door and back toward her place in the arena. As we reached her pedestal, I cued her to mount it, but she ignored the

## THE BIG CAGE

cue. Instead, she started running under the long-legged metal pedestals that are grouped around this sector.

As Snip was about to pass under the pedestal occupied by a scrappy lioness, the latter jumped down on top of her. Then, almost instantly, Duke, the big lion that had started the fight with Rosie a few minutes earlier, jumped down off his pedestal and grabbed a tiger.

All the other tigers except three jumped to the floor of the arena—not so much to join the fight as to be in readiness to leave the arena. There are no greater scrapers than tigers, but they avoid fights, whereas the lion instinctively starts a fight or joins the nearest one.

The tigers had hardly touched the floor of the arena when the lions, every single one in the act, were after them. Each lion was making a lunge for the nearest tiger.

The arena was now in an uproar. It fairly trembled with the struggles of the combatants. All of my animals except three tigers—Rajah, Empress, and Rosie—joined the awful free-for-all. This meant that twenty lions were fighting nine tigers; and unless I could quell the riot that in its opening moments breathed more hate and murderous intent than any animal fight I had ever seen, it was a reasonable certainty that some of my tigers would be wiped out. The tiger is one of the deadliest of four-legged fighters, but he is not a super-creature, and when surrounded and badly outnumbered, he finds it difficult to fight in his most effective manner. A tiger is normally at his best when fighting one other animal; and usually that one other animal is doomed. The striped cat is not a group fighter. As I

have pointed out before, lions are gangsters, tigers fight alone.

At one time it looked as if ten lions were battling Chester—a good-sized animal for a Sumatra tiger—at one and the same time. One had him by the hind quarters, another slashed at his right shoulder, still another dug murderous teeth into his left leg. And all around him were lions ready to bite and claw him. Swarming about him, they had singled him out as their special victim. I wanted to go to Chester's rescue, but it would have been a suicidal thing to do. The lions would have turned from him and made for me. They were now definitely past the controllable stage. Cues would mean nothing. The trainer who tried to break up a fight of this kind while it was at its height, instead of waiting for it to subside, would definitely establish himself as too ignorant to be permitted to enter an arena again.

There was only one thing for me to do and that was to get out of the arena if possible and from the outside try to drive some of the combatants through the tunnel and back into their cages. The tunnel door was wide open. So great was the din of battle that the boy at the door was unable to hear my cry: "Let 'em out! Let 'em out!" But my frantic gestures had made clear my meaning. Nothing, however, was accomplished. The tigers would have been glad to leave the arena, but there were too many lions on top of them.

Rosie, Empress, and Rajah sat calmly on their pedestals, watching the terrific struggle on the floor below them. Rajah, one of the greatest fighters the arena has ever known, dozed off occasionally during the battle. Yet, in an animal-against-animal fight with

any lion or tiger in the ring (all other beasts excluded and the scrap confined to two combatants) I'd have backed Rajah to get no worse than a draw. He was diabolical in combat—one of the fastest, bravest, and most powerful tigers I've ever handled—but gang fights bored him; and now he sat and yawned his lack of interest in the epic struggle taking place a few yards away from where he languidly sat.

Chester's plight seemed of no interest at all to Rajah. Chester had gotten himself into a fix and he would have to get out of it himself. No sense fighting lions when they outnumber you. Fight 'em when you have an even chance. . . .

I had to get out of the big cage somehow, and perhaps from the outside contrive to stampede the animals toward the tunnel door. Besides, I was too fond of life to risk being torn by this group of killers; for now that my animals had all lost their heads, I was inside a barred jungle—a far more dangerous place than any real jungle. At any moment the struggling pack might lose interest in the fight and turn on me. Only their absorption in the grim business of annihilating one another was what had saved me so far.

With my back to the bars, to prevent an attack from behind, I slowly worked my way toward the safety-cage. It would have been foolhardy to run; that would have attracted too much attention. But Chester had caught sight of me and, deciding that I was responsible for all his troubles, he tried to reach me. Shaking himself loose by a tremendous effort, he started toward me with hate in his eyes. He was stopped by the lion gang after he had traveled about two yards. They were all on top of him again. That brought me closer to the

bloodthirsty pack and it was more important than ever that I reach the safety-cage.

Once more Chester, eying me venomously, started for me, but his assailants had him down again before he had advanced more than a foot. If I could only reach that safety-cage I should be able to do something for him before his enemies destroyed him. He was holding his own and though he was bleeding in two or three places, there was no indication that he had been seriously injured.

And all the while the three tigers on the high seats continued to look down at the spectacle, plainly bored. Rajah seemed drowsier than ever. The conduct of the crowd contrasted dramatically with the blasé attitude of the striped non-combatants. All around me I could hear women screaming and men shouting.

Another step . . . and still another . . . and with each succeeding one a half-hour seemed to elapse. As I neared the safety-cage at this snail-like pace, Theba, one of my biggest tigers, shook himself free of the milling pack and ran over and mounted his floor seat to the left of the safety-door. The lion he was battling did not pursue him, but turned against another tiger. In his excitement Theba did not notice that the tunnel door was open and that he could have escaped into the chute and gone to his cage. That is the only possible explanation of his queer conduct in climbing back to his seat.

I stood rooted where I was, awaiting developments. About ten seconds later Hilda, one of my better-behaved lionesses, decided to quit the fray. She also, too excited to realize the tunnel door was open, got back on a pedestal. Instead of taking her own, she scrambled up on the floor seat to the right of the safety-

cage! To reach the door now, I must pass between a lion and a tiger. I had no intention of attempting anything like that. . . . What to do? I wasn't panicky, but I was decidedly worried.

And then Chester made my decision for me. With almost unnatural strength he again tore himself loose from his attackers, and, teeth bared and face distorted with rage and hate, headed for me. I made a dash for it—straight between the two animals that flanked me, right and left! To this day, I don't know how I ever made it. . . . I don't recall being attacked, but when I slammed the door of the safety-cage, I noticed that my shirt was torn and that my left arm was bleeding from a surface wound. Theba had probably made a pass at me as I dashed by. Taken by surprise, he had not had a chance to launch a real attack; or perhaps he was content with a swipe at me.

The lions were again on top of Chester. They had evidently stopped his last dash before he had covered more than a yard.

All around me I could hear the shrieks of horrified spectators. I was a bit dazed from shock, but my head cleared and I set to work doing what I could to break up the fight. Assistants had been standing ready to pump ammonia into the arena, but they feared that in addition to affecting the animals the fumes might overcome me. I signaled them to let fly. At once several of the struggling beasts, coughing and choking, dashed for the tunnel door.

Only nine animals now remained in the arena—seven lions and two tigers, one of the latter obviously dead. Yet the lions continued to maul the lifeless body.

I decided to go in and break up this remnant of the

fray. One of the animals lunged for me as I neared the group, but I turned him with a blaze from my blank-cartridge gun. Then, alternately using my chair, a pole, and my gun, I drove the last of the warriors from the arena—all except the two tigers. One was dead and the other, Snip, was badly injured. She just managed to crawl to her cage. The best veterinary in the district was quickly summoned to supplement our own first-aid efforts, but it was too late. Poor Snip died three or four hours later.

One of the most amazing things about this awful battle (the worst arena fight of my whole career) was the fact that Chester, who had been surrounded by lions for almost the entire period of the tussle, emerged with no serious injuries. He was torn in three or four places, but the wounds were all superficial and in ten days he was as spry and chipper as ever.

The Battle of Collinsville made a lasting impression on me. For weeks, in my sleep, I could see that pack of lions and tigers locked together in deadly combat. The experience came as close to unnerving me as any I've ever had—perhaps a little closer. Several times, in the months that followed, I wondered whether it wouldn't be a good idea to give up my present work and enter a safer and quieter field. I turned the question over in my mind more than I've ever admitted.

And always, after deciding that perhaps I'd better quit, I was horrified by the dullness of some of the other possible occupations that I considered. They were not for me. I knew I couldn't stand them. They would do worse than kill me; they would kill my interest in life. There is a fascination about the big cage that only an animal-trainer fully understands, and I don't be-

lieve I'll quit while I can still crack a whip and brandish a kitchen chair.

The year of 1930 found me breaking in ten new animals to bring the total of my group up to forty. It will be remembered that when, a few years earlier, I announced my plan to work twenty-two lions and tigers in the same arena, I was branded by some as a "nut." Now there were those who made me out to be no mere crazy man: I was a super-lunatic, no less. For who else would think of entering a thirty-two-foot arena with forty lions and tigers and attempting to make them perform for at least twenty minutes?

There was nothing casual about my plan to work twoscore cats in the same arena I had been using right along. It was impossible to increase the size of the arena. Experience had taught me that an arena thirty-two feet in diameter was the largest I could use. The big top in which we showed could not accommodate a larger one without cutting down the distances from arena to seats on all sides to the point where real showmanship in presenting the act would cease to be. There was no sense in building a bigger "big cage" unless it was considerably bigger. And a steel arena that was even five or six feet more in diameter could not have been used in some of the auditoriums in which we played. There would not have been enough clearance between the great steel circle and the "track" that had to be kept open between the spectators and the ring.

Before I went ahead with the proposed augmentation of my group—which, if successful, would give me by far the biggest and most spectacular cat act ever put

on—I figured the thing out mathematically. Working with a diagram of the arena, I carefully calculated my distances until I had recorded in detail the particular spacing out of my forty pedestals that would give me the maximum of safety. One of my critics (who, incidentally, called my plan for using forty lions and tigers a circus publicity story which I had no intention of making true) ridiculed me for blithely announcing the number of beasts I would use in my “so-called enlarged act” without any indication that I had really studied the plan. Little did this severe gentleman know how much time I had put in, going over the arena terrain, before I decided it was all right to let the circus management announce that the next stage in the development of my act involved the adding of ten new lions and tigers. (Two of my group of thirty-two were killed at Collinsville.)

This, by the way, is a good measure of the progress that has been made in the training of wild animals. With the passing of each year, the public seems to demand something more spectacular. When no new sensational tricks occur to me, I increase the number of my performers, which in a way is a trick in itself—a much more difficult one than the mere teaching of a new stunt or two to your old group, when the planned increase is, as in the case under discussion, so great.

One by one, I introduced the new animals into the act. This, of course, I did in winter quarters where I don’t have a worried audience on my hands if one of my noble experiments goes wrong and a free-for-all results or one of my beasts decides to attack his trainer. After weeks of intensive training, I felt I was ready

to show the public—and my critics—that I could work forty lions and tigers as smoothly as I had worked thirty-two.

Nine of my new animals had been merged into the old act with a modicum of grief. It had been a strenuous undertaking, but there had been fewer fights than I expected, and I had not been so savagely attacked; some minor clawings were all I could show in the way of injuries.

The tenth animal—Trudy, a Sumatra tigress—did not quite satisfy me. She was a freak in that she was one of the few striped cats within the range of my experience that made a practice of attacking lions. In lion-tiger fights in the big cage, the lion almost without exception is the aggressor, as I have pointed out.

Another thing I did not like about Trudy was the fact that she was not alert-minded. In an act of this kind, where the big spectacular effects sought are largely dependent on an instantaneous response to cues, it does not help to include an animal like Trudy, who frequently seemed to be in a trance. Now and then she showed signs of intelligence and then she would lapse back into a disappointing sluggishness.

I would have gladly substituted another for Trudy, but I had no tiger to take her place. I was thinking of leaving her out of the act entirely and confining myself to thirty-nine—but in circus business “thirty-nine” sounds like ten less than “forty.” And, besides, when you announce forty you’d better produce forty or some crank will brand you as a faker.

I was to give a dress rehearsal of the new act early in 1930, at Kokomo, Indiana, a few days before we were scheduled to open our season. Trudy had not at-

tacked a lion in three or four days and she was responding fairly well to cues, so I was going to take a chance on her. I had made up my mind to let her conduct at the Kokomo rehearsal decide whether she should stay or go.

The press usually likes to "catch" the dress rehearsal that precedes our annual opening. Every year sees some new feature added to the show and the newspaper men want to be let in on these new attractions in advance. I was especially anxious to have them turn out for this particular performance, on account of the reports that had been circulated that my enlarged lion-tiger act was a mere publicity ruse. I wanted the newspaper crowd to see for themselves. They had always been more than fair to me and I knew I could again count on them to report fairly what they saw.

Our dress rehearsal took place under a big tent. Our band was on hand and a full performance similar in all respects to those played before a regular audience was to be given.

The time came for me to put on my act and my animals were sent through the chute. All the preliminaries came off with precision. The first batch of animals was driven into the arena and then I entered. It was a "fighting entrance." The animals blocked my entrance and then obediently scattered when, cracking my whip and firing my gun, I fought my way into the arena.

I had almost finished pyramiding the group when I noticed that Trudy was behaving queerly. She became rattled and excited as the music increased in volume and it suddenly flashed through my mind that this was her first performance to the accompaniment of a band.

Perhaps I should have given her a chance to get used to the music before putting her through a rehearsal. With animals that are instinctive performers, this is unnecessary, but I should not have overlooked any bets in the case of Trudy. I felt, however, that if I worked her cautiously and nursed her along from start to finish, I should not have any real trouble with her.

Trudy took a front seat in the pyramid instead of one in the rear and I was coaxing her to leave it, with all the persuasiveness at my command. I whistled softly to her, gave her slowly executed arm and body cues, and even stopped working on her for a few seconds in an effort to quiet her; but her head kept bobbing in all directions and once or twice she swung around and glared in the direction whence the music was coming.

Like the incalculable beast that she was, Trudy calmed down for a second and then, just as I was sure she would now respond, she suddenly sprang at me. I swung my chair up in time to meet the attack, but her weight plus the force of her spring was too much for me and the chair went spinning out of my hand. She quickly set herself for another spring and as she lunged at me I blazed away with my blank-cartridge gun.

Trudy was a determined girl that afternoon. Pistol-fire meant nothing to her. She came after me a third time, leaping full at me and hitting me in the chest. The collision sent me sprawling flat on my back, and I landed between two high pedestals occupied by tigers. As I went down, Trudy pounced on me, getting my right arm between her jaws. But she did not have a chance to clamp them together with full force. (Had she done so, the arm would have snapped like a stick of wood.) Partially raising myself, I saw a lion come

rushing over. He grabbed Trudy by the hind quarters and she let go my arm.

As I sat up, the tigers on the pedestals overhead (I had completely forgotten about them in the excitement of the moment!) began to claw me. One got me by the shoulder, virtually ripping the shirt off my back but doing no serious damage. The other grazed the top of my head, inflicting a slight scalp wound. I ducked back to the floor and as I did so, Allen Hauser, equestrian director of the show, came running over and handed me a heavy pole through the bars.

Meanwhile, the other tigers jumped to the floor, to leave the arena. The lions, ever eager to gang up and start a fight, were after them.

The lion, Nero, that had grabbed Trudy was still dragging her around. Nero was twice as big and heavy as the three-hundred-pound Sumatra tigress and he could have hammered her into a pulp. He contented himself with clawing her whenever she resisted.

I was now on my feet, after Nero. If I could make him let go of Trudy, I might be able to stop the free-for-all before it got well under way. As I jabbed at Nero with my pole and chair, Manager Danny Odom shrieked through the bars, "Let him go, for God's sake, and come on out!" Good old Danny was worried about my safety. I was concerned about that, myself (although at the moment I had partially forgotten my arm injury, which later sent me to the hospital), but I was concentrating on preventing another catastrophe like the Battle of Collinsville.

Bleeding freely, I went after Nero in no playful manner. The lion was digging deeper into the tigress's hind quarters and if I didn't pry him loose the result

would be a serious internal injury that might mean the death of Trudy.

I succeeded in making Nero relax his jaws. Evidently content with what he had done to the tigress, he let me drive him to his pedestal. With chair and gun I had no trouble breaking up the other fights, now that Nero, the arena boss, was back on his perch. I quickly drove the tigers out of the arena, Trudy bringing up the rear and just managing to crawl through the tunnel back to her cage. Then I drove the lions out.

My arm proved to be badly chewed and I had lost considerable blood. I was rushed to the Good Samaritan Hospital, where I was quickly injected with tetanus antitoxin. In five days I was myself again and they let me out. The injured arm was in bandages, but I was able to go on with my preparations to open in a few days with forty lions and tigers.

My opening was a big success. From start to finish everything clicked, and my detractors took back their unkind words. Everywhere in the circus world the new act was acclaimed as making new animal-training history. I do not say this with my chest out. In mentioning it I am merely recording a fact.

Trudy, by the way, recovered in about a month and developed into a fair performer. I later concluded that she was not really a stupid animal. She was nervous and high-strung and somewhat lacking in concentration. When she could be made to concentrate, she performed almost as well as any animal in the arena.

The Kokomo accident gave the newspaper men a glorious chance. The story made the press-association wires and the next day the country was reading how

my faithful lion Nero had saved me when the naughty, naughty Trudy tried to kill me.

I hate to spoil a good story, but I like to present things as they really are; so I am compelled to confess that Nero was not even remotely concerned with saving me when he attacked Trudy from behind. He merely saw a good opportunity to rip up a striped tabby, one of his enemies, while he had her at a disadvantage.

I'm not saying this in disparagement of the newspaper boys, who have been swell to me during my whole career. It must have looked very much as if Nero were trying to save my life, and I don't blame them for writing the story. It made grand reading. However, too much sentimental stuff is written about the noble animals that save the lives of their masters, and I feel I owe it to my readers to explain that Nero was showing his hatred of tigers, not his love of man.

Too bad Nero didn't know how to read! He would have had a wonderful time reading about himself the next few days. One story declared that it was only natural he should have come to my rescue, "for there has always been the same understanding between Beatty and this *gentle* [?] lion as exists between a dog-lover and his pet." Then followed an exciting account of what happened, the inevitable concluding note being Nero's determination to save his master's life:

Beatty was thrown to the ground. The tigress was on him. Her claws ripped his bare forearm. She buried her teeth. She was after his throat. One swing of her teeth at his jugular vein and he would be gone. He threw up a protecting arm. Her teeth sank into his wrist. She tore the other arm with her claws.

Then from across the iron enclosed arena, with a roar,

a great body hurtled through the air. It landed straight upon Trudy's flanks, sinking its claws deep into her sides. It buried its sharp teeth in her flanks, it tossed her aside, slashing and biting her. It was Nero, Beatty's prized performer in the act and a friend for years.

Another story kept referring to Nero as my "buddy." Here is a passage: "The big lion for years had *graciously* [?] taken orders from the man who was more his buddy than his master even though that man did crack a whip now and then. . . . Nero had no intention of letting his buddy be wiped out by a tiger. With a defiant roar that seemed to say, 'So you think you're going to get my buddy!' Nero flung himself at the cruel tigress and gave her what she deserved," etc.

The publication of these newspaper articles resulted in my being asked to write a book for children, telling all about Nero from the time I first broke him in, to the day he "saved" my life. I was also asked to prepare a magazine article on the subject, and if the editors, who were naturally unable to understand my refusal (I gave them no reasons) should happen to read these paragraphs, they'll understand now. One of these gentlemen thought me pretty stubborn.

Two years after the Kokomo incident—in January, 1932, to be exact—the same Nero, forgetting he was supposed to be my buddy, attacked me in winter quarters at Peru, Indiana. The attack sent me to the hospital for ten weeks and almost resulted in my death—as you will learn in a later chapter.

Other outstanding incidents in connection with the development of my lion-tiger group of forty are discussed elsewhere in these pages. In this chapter, I have confined myself to occurrences that illustrate the in-

finite variety of the difficulties that arose in connection with the growth of the act.

As a matter of fact, my entire book might easily be called "Mixing Lions and Tigers." That, unquestionably, is its main theme.

## IV

### *Bears Surprise You*

No OTHER animal the trainer encounters is quite so full of surprises as the bear. For this reason the steel arena knows no greater source of stories.

A good lion or tiger story is almost without exception a thrill story. It is not my purpose to underrate thrills, for I make a living by providing 'em. But bear stories have a habit of being lots of other things—funny, pathetic, revealing, and what not. Bears are the extremists of the animal world. Their playful antics are frequently killing, and so are their jaws. They have convulsed audiences with their clowning, and they have sent some of our best trainers to their graves.

I'll preface my first bear story by saying that for years I have been the victim of practical jokers. People seem to get a kick out of calling me up in the middle of the night and informing me that one of my animals has escaped. So that when at four o'clock one cold winter morning I received a telephone call notifying me that one of my polar bears had gotten out of its cage, I didn't take it seriously. In fact, I seemed to detect a faint chuckle in my informant's voice. I hung up and went back to sleep.

The circus was at Peru, Indiana, at the time. We were in winter quarters and I was stopping at a local

hotel. A shipment of fifteen polar bears, which I was to start training soon, had come in a few days before and it was one of those that was supposed to have escaped. About a week earlier I had received another call—from some one who told me that he was the night-watchman—to the effect that one of my lions was loose. I fell for the gag, which meant getting out of bed at two o'clock of a freezing morning and making the three-mile trip from the hotel to winter quarters. There I found all my lions in their cages and everything in good shape. As I returned to the hotel to resume my interrupted sleep I felt capable of taking the first practical joker I caught red-handed and tossing him into the cage of one of my more vicious cats.

A second call came about half-past four, repeating the message about the missing polar bear. I hardly listened this time. The second this sleep-destroyer announced himself as the night-watchman I was convinced that I was being hoaxed again. I hung up in the middle of a phrase and notified the hotel phone-operator that I was receiving no calls until nine o'clock the next morning.

You can imagine my surprise when, on arriving at circus headquarters the following day, I discovered that one of my polar bears had actually escaped. The calls had really come from the night-watchman!

"Didn't the night-watchman notify you over the phone that one of the polars was loose?" asked the manager.

I nodded blankly.

"Then why didn't you hustle over here and do something about it?"

There was no time for a discourse on practical

jokers and why they were responsible for my thinking that my early-morning summons was just another one of their playful pranks. Even after I had been bawled out, I half thought I was being kidded. I counted the bears several times and not until I found we were one short did I fully realize that this wasn't another one of those dumb gags.

It was evident how the animal had escaped. This shipment of bears, which had arrived sooner than they were expected, had been temporarily housed in some old wagon cages that had not been used for three or four years. Our fugitive had succeeded in yanking two or three bars out of the wooden framework in which they were sunk. The framework had begun to rot, investigation showed, and the animal apparently had not found it very difficult to run away from his new home.

I routed out a "bear-boy" (one of the boys assigned to assisting me with these animals) and we began our search. I armed myself with a chair and a broom. Experience had taught me the folly of using blank cartridges on bears, which do not respond to gun-fire as lions and tigers do. Footwork is the main factor in dealing with a bear at close range. Make it plain you're boss and then be prepared to dance out of his way in case you find you haven't made it as plain as you thought you had.

Should you happen to be in the small minority who remember what the winter of 1924 was like around Peru, Indiana, you have some idea of the type of weather I drew as I set out to find the missing bear. The thermometer had been around the zero mark and this particular day it was below zero.

The ground had been snow-covered for several days

and the boy and I started looking around in the snowy footing for bear tracks. We soon discovered that our undertaking was no cinch, for the ground all around winter quarters was a jumbled mass of horse, mule, camel, elephant, and wagon tracks—not to mention many other varieties. After an hour's hard work, in the course of which our numbed hands and feet kept reminding us of the zero weather, we found tracks that were definitely those of a bear. When we started tracing them, we saw that the animal had circled winter quarters several times before making a break for the open; perhaps he couldn't quite tear himself away from the spot where the other bears were. It was no fun leaving his pals so soon after his arrival in a strange land, and the indications were that he had debated for some time before he finally wrenched himself away from the premises.

We followed the fugitive's tracks to the banks of the Mississineva River. This was a logical destination for an animal that instinctively was a "fisher." Our runaway (he was to become known as Roamer on account of the way he roamed all over the State of Indiana) had evidently set out to see if he couldn't discover some piscatorial delights. Whether he did any fishing or not I don't know, but we traced him for some distance up the banks of the Mississineva to the Wabash. Circus quarters at Peru lie midway between these two rivers, which are not far apart. Then we followed his tracks up the Wabash. In the process we bumped into a man who evidently thought we were crazy—and I must admit that we didn't exactly present a picture of out-and-out sanity. Suppose you met two chaps who appeared to be wandering aimlessly along the banks of the

Wabash—one of them, the bear-boy, carrying a chair and the other, his frozen master, carrying a broom, and suppose the gentleman with the broom suddenly accosted you and asked, "Have you seen anything of a polar bear?" Would you think you were in the presence of undefiled normality of the bean or would you have a suspicion that these two figures that suddenly bobbed up out of the nowhere with their strange equipment and stranger questions were a pair of escaped lunatics? There was no time to tell our plainly startled friend that there was nothing like a chair, with its four convenient points for warding off attacks, for keeping animals at bay, and that the brush part of a broom was a swell thing for a bear to chew on until he regained his composure. Bears, of course, have no interest in man as food, but when they're angry they like to bite, and my theory is that they might as well chew away on a broom as on a human arm or leg, which is harder to replace.

We never got an answer to our question. A look of mingled astonishment and fear on his face, our chance acquaintance of the Wabash stood and stared at me for a moment, then stared at me again, his eyes popping this time, and then he stared once more at the boy. Then he started off suddenly into the early morning snow without even letting us hear his voice. Sadly we went on our way without the aid of our chance co-Wabasher. Looking back at my broom, he increased his stride to the closest possible approach to a run in the heavy snow.

Again the bear-boy and I took up the task of tracing Roamer. His tracks along the Wabash bank were very confusing. We traced him out to the ice of the river

and traced him back again. Indecision, based on an unfamiliarity with his surroundings, was plainly indicated.

No one can say we didn't keep trying; and no one can say we didn't freeze in the process. The circus would have its polar bear back, if it was possible. If the said animal messed up any one in the course of its fling at freedom, it would cost the circus plenty of money—and all would be far from well with one Clyde Beatty, who had been informed of the animal's escape and had promptly gone to sleep, for reasons already given.

These thoughts kept passing through my mind as the bear-boy and I followed those hesitant footprints of Roamer's. The animal would reach a certain point, back-track, and then, deviating only slightly from his original course, return to the point he originally had in mind. It was all very bewildering; but there was no doubt that we were on the fugitive's trail, for some of the tracks we found looked rather fresh.

My back was breaking from stooping over mile after mile and giving bear tracks the benefit of my Sherlock Holmes eye. And then, standing up straight to rest my complaining back a bit, I saw our Wandering Boy straight ahead of us, not more than a hundred yards away!

Not wanting my assistant to take any chances—for, after all, it was not his job to risk being clawed and bitten—I ordered him to stay where he was and I went up to greet the bear. Roamer was standing and watching us. Possessed of a keen sense of smell, he probably had discovered us a full minute before we discovered him. As I advanced, he stood motionless. Certainly he didn't act like an animal that feared me. And why

should a polar bear fear man? Roamer may have been asking himself that question, for polar bears had killed some of our best animal-trainers. Perhaps Roamer, reading one day in "The Polar Bear Gazette," had learned that.

When I was within twenty-five yards of him, the bear was still standing as when I first spotted him, giving me a thorough optic overhauling. Not until I was only ten yards from him did he turn to run. Not wanting him to get any farther away from winter quarters than necessary, I made a complete circle around him instead of chasing him in a straight line. The idea, of course, was to steer him back toward Peru. I finally got ahead of him and began driving him in the right direction. The bear-boy was right in our path and I'll never forget the way he dashed across the ice of the Wabash—although the bear was not really after him. I yelled to the boy, but he continued his Eliza act on the ice. Finally, by signaling frantically, I got him to return.

I was behind the bear and the boy was well behind me. And I kept driving the animal toward winter quarters. Roamer seemed to know where he was going and, curiously enough, offered little resistance. Perhaps he was beginning to miss those pals of his. I had no trouble at all in driving him back to Peru.

Not until we reached the steel arena (the same one in which I perform before audiences and which is used in winter for breaking in animals) did I have any trouble with the runaway. As I opened the arena door and tried to drive him in, he suddenly wheeled and made for me, teeth bared, by way of making it clear that his surrender was not complete. There was no doubt that he meant business. But I meant business too.

By now I was fed up with the whole job and I was determined to finish it. I shoved the broom into Roamer's mouth and kept forcing him back. With something to chew on, his intentions regarding me were less serious.

My objective was the arena's tunnel. If I could get Roamer there, it would be easy to make him go into his cage, which had been repaired in my absence and placed so that I could drive him into it from the tunnel. And he seemed to have had enough, for he submitted to being driven toward the tunnel and into his cage.

Not long afterward I broke him to roll globes, carry fire torches in his mouth, and do a lot of other things I expect of performing bears.

I've trained and handled plenty of bears—in fact, I once worked the biggest bear act ever shown in America—but I've never known a member of the species to equal the feat of Bill, a big brown Russian bear that I was using in a mixed group that included, in addition to him and three other Russians, an assortment of leopards, tigers, pumas, lions, and hyenas.

Bears and tigers, of course, are natural enemies. The bears entered the arena before their striped enemies came on; and, strangely enough, in the early days of this act, they did not seem to realize how formidable the big cats were. More in mischief than with any thought of starting a scrap, the bears would reach out for the tigers as the latter entered the ring. Not until they were clawed up a few times did my Russian quartet become aware of the dangerous potentialities of the animals they had treated so lightly.

The bears and tigers grew to hate each other. There was a continual growling and snarling when they were in the arena together. Bill was becoming a moody Russian by reason of three successive beatings at the hands—or paws—of Nellie, a tigress that had no use for bears and made no bones about it. Bill never got a chance to get back at Nellie, but he had a fine opportunity one day to avenge himself on Lil, the other tiger in the act, and he took advantage of it with surprising speed and effectiveness. It's something that had never happened before—at least, there is no other record of it in animal history—and probably it will never happen again.

Lil was on one of the high seats. It was her cue to stretch out her body full length, her hind legs remaining on the seat, her fore legs resting on a support in front of her. The boy whose job it was to hook this seat in place had been careless, with the result that the seat came loose. Down toppled Lil, landing right in front of Bill's pedestal. In a split second the bear made a leap for the fallen foe, grabbing her from behind by the neck. Bill had one of those unbreakable holds and he snapped the big cat's neck before she had a chance to defend herself. Lil died a few minutes afterward.

Needless to say, the bear had a tremendous advantage in this brief encounter, but the occurrence astonished me none the less. While Bill was sure to have a big early edge when he attacked, the chances were a hundred to one against his quickly getting that unbreakable hold. If he didn't succeed in doing this, he was a goner, for tigers are lightning-fast and Lil would have quickly brought her claws and teeth into play and made an end of that over-ambitious bear.

Another thing that surprised me was the way Bill held on. Bears almost invariably, in attacking with their teeth, go in for what I call "series biting." They bite, bite, bite, relaxing the teeth and sinking them in again and again. It was the first and only time I had ever seen a bear bite and hold on. Instinctively, Bill must have known that to let go and try a new hold meant certain death. So he emerged as probably the only bear that ever killed a tiger.

In 1925, a bear was responsible for my temporarily turning female impersonator—showing that anything is possible where bears are concerned, to which statement you would readily agree if you knew me; for certainly I was never meant to be a female impersonator.

Here's how it happened. I was having my first season as an animal-trainer with the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus. The show opened with a "spec" (circus language for spectacle) in the course of which a sheik—played by Mickey McDonald, now a well-known circus clown—galloped out on a magnificent-looking horse and sang a mournful song about how he had been betrayed by the girl whom he had regarded as the lass of lasses.

Mickey had a pretty fair voice in those days and he managed to sob out his plaintive story with good effect. Finishing it, he would dash offstage and return with the Girl Who Had Done Him Wrong. Slung limply across his saddle, she was a perfect picture of abject humility as Mickey again made moan, this time in louder and even soggier tones, about the perfidious wench who had blighted his life and made him Lose Faith. When Mickey made this second appearance, he

was followed by a colorful array of circus Arabs—his “court followers,” as we called ‘em, though none of us knew for sure whether a sheik held court—and this picturesque retinue would nod sympathetically and even wail their distress when the sheik, growing a bit more than ordinarily emotional, seemed particularly overcome by the dirty deal he had received.

The climax of Mickey’s song came when he dramatically announced that the faithless lady was not fit to live; for which reason he, the Sheik of Whatnot (I forgot the gorgeous bill-board name) proposed to toss her to the animules, begosh. Having made which solemn pronouncement, he proceeded to dash over to the animal arena in the center ring where three bears, two pumas, and two leopards disported themselves. The sheik, with a final sob about the emptiness of a universe that was so full of feminine treachery, opened the door of the arena and tossed the limp betrayer to the animals.

The lady would then save herself by “charming” the animals. Needless to say, she was an animal-trainer and what she did was to put through their paces these animals that were supposed to tear her to bits.

It was a swell stunt and it brought down the house—when it worked. The only trouble with it was that while the lady who was supposed to charm the beasts was admirably equipped with courage, she did not have complete command of her charges. One of the bears sensed this (bears have a faculty for plucking things out of the air) and refused to accept her as boss of the arena, which was rather hard on the lady, who was a good scout and deserved better luck. This particular bear had the effrontery to walk up to the gal night after

night while she was charming the performers in the arena and embrace her. This—no kidding—was worse than being attacked; for the result was laughter at a time when the audience was supposed to be thrilled. It just about broke up the “spec.”

The bear made no attempt to bite the lady who was supposed to subdue the animals in the arena. He just rushed up to her and hugged her, making it impossible for the act to go on for a minute or so. It's tough to have an audience roar half-derisively when, thrilled to death, it is supposed to be on the proverbial edge of the seat biting its collective finger-nail.

One night our trouble-making bear rushed the animal-charmer so hard—almost rushed her off her feet, in fact—that the lady was scared and afterward she announced she would not enter the animal arena again, a situation that caused the then manager of the circus, Danny Odom, to become a bit agitated. The act was billed all over the country-side and had to be shown.

Then some one gave birth to an idea and Manager Odom brought it to me. Was I willing to don feminine attire and go on as the “charmer”? The idea, at first, seemed preposterous, for how in blazes could I hope to make features as definitely masculine as mine seem feminine? Certainly I was never meant to impersonate fair ladies. But I worked on the problem—and gladly, too, for the circus management had been very kind to me—and I finally got an idea. Why couldn't I be one of those heavily veiled Arab damsels? No one in the circus could design absolutely authentic costuming, but we felt reasonably certain that it was all right for a sheik's

gal to be heavily veiled. We seemed to recall that that's how the girl friends of sheiks were shown in the movies.

The lady animal-trainer's dress fitted me (she was not petite) but laughter was the inevitable result when I put it on for a trial showing for the benefit of my circus confrères. It was a sleeveless gown and my biceps, fairly bulging ones, were not exactly the arms of a girl. So it was decided to put sleeves on the dress.

My substitution proved quite a success, although Sheik Mickey McDonald did not entirely approve of me as his betrayer. We were—and are—good friends, but he had a showman's natural objection to the fact that I couldn't take my rôle seriously. To show I wasn't taking it *too* seriously, I felt I had to do something. I hit upon the plan of tickling Sheik McDonald in the ribs while he was singing his doleful ballad of betrayal. I must admit I was taking an unfair advantage. As I wore a veil that reached to my eyes, who could see me laugh as I tickled Mickey? Whereas who could fail to see him laugh? It was a queer contradiction, this business of a sheik damning in eloquent lyric phrases the damsel who had wrecked him, and laughing hysterically in the process. After a while the management decided that perhaps it would be best to discontinue me as a female impersonator—which was a great relief, for I had undertaken the rôle in the first place only to help out the good scouts for whom I was working. And, then, I was never quite sure what to do about the mash notes I received from gentlemen who wanted to meet me. And the flowers!

I'm not mentioning these facts to show that I was a good female impersonator. I wasn't. Several times dur-

ing my substitution for the charmer, Manager Odom told me my performance would be more convincing if I cracked my whips in a less masculine manner. It takes plenty of strength to crack an animal whip properly, but it seems that only circus folk know that; and I continued to receive mash notes and posies from the boys. It just got to be too much for me; and I rejoiced when I was told that my services were no longer required as a female impersonator.

This is the first time the public has had any information to the effect that I served in such a rôle. I prefer telling the story myself to having somebody come along some day and expose me as an ex-nymph of the steel arena. I'm glad I helped out my employers when they called upon me, although I admit that perhaps my conduct could have been construed as being more co-operative if I had spent less time tickling Mickey McDonald while he was trying to sing. My only defense is that I had to do something to keep from being marooned in that act. I recall tickling Mickey the hardest the day I heard one of the circus executives say that if they got some one to coach me in feminine mannerisms I might be able to continue indefinitely in the rôle.

Bears, bears, bears. So many bear stories occur to me!

There's, for instance, the story of Norman, the "ascension" bear who was featured in a three-ring act with a black Canadian bear in each of the end arenas and a polar bear, Norman, in the middle ring. The climax of the act came when the platforms on which the bears were doing their tricks were pulled up into the air to the accompaniment of fireworks, made effective by

darkening the arena lights. On each end platform were a bear and a girl. On the middle platform were a bear and Clyde Beatty. The act called for the raising of the platforms to a height of about fifty feet.

It was not an easy act. The platforms were seven feet by seven feet, which doesn't give you much of a margin in case, when you're high up, your bear companion grows nasty. There was no protection of any kind, for the platforms had no guards or rails. There was nothing to do but jump in such a case.

The girls who worked the end platforms were game, although (and I am not handing myself anything when I point it out) the untried polar bear with which I consorted was a much more dangerous animal than the tested and naturally tamer Canadian bears that I assigned to the girls.

We were doing the act one day when, at a height of about twenty feet, the rope that supported my bear and me snapped and Norman and I came crashing earthward. We had hardly struck the floor of the arena when Norman came tearing at me. I had the wind knocked out of me, but the bear didn't seem to be affected much. It was not so good for me; for it isn't much fun to have five hundred pounds of polar bear come tearing at you. Assistants drove off my assailant as he dug into my legs, which, fortunately, were protected by burlap sacks. Not having much faith in Norman, I had taken the precaution of thoroughly burlapping my legs, a common practice of animal-trainers during a practice stunt.

This accident marked the end of Norman's career as a platform performer. Nothing could induce him to step on the platform after this mishap, and in retrospect I believe I can see his point.

Then there was Himmy, so called because he was a Himalayan bear. Himmy decided to demonstrate that any bear that really concentrated could succeed in breaking up the "spec." He was in the arena, along with other animals, waiting his turn to go on. This was in 1928, when our opening spectacle starred a prima donna whose job it was to sing the audience into a receptive attitude toward our show. And she usually succeeded, too.

On the night to which I refer, she was handicapped by the fact that Himmy managed somehow to get out of the arena. The main lights that illuminated the show had been extinguished and dim colored lights had been flashed on. The band began to play and our vocalist began to sing. Then all of a sudden the music stopped. Himmy, emerging from the arena, grabbed one of the musicians, a chap who played an enormous horn that looped around his neck. When the bear grabbed the horn-player, the other musicians ran, though Himmy was really being quite friendly, confining himself to hugging the horn-player. But this instrumentalist, perhaps remembering occasions when circus bears used their teeth and claws, let out a yell and broke up the "spec" by toppling over in a sort of faint while his brother musicians scattered in all directions before the "attack" of one of the most harmless bears that ever performed.

Not long afterward Himmy gave us another surprise. Having discovered that it would be a good idea to keep so active and mischievous an animal where my eye could be on him until it was his turn to perform, I made a practice of having him tied up outside in the space between the menagerie tent and the big top. It

was a good place to keep this animal, one of whose habits it was to chew on anything in sight. There was nothing there for Himmy to chew on. The canvas of the tents was the only thing chewable that was within sight and fortunately that was out of his reach. But I had not given Himmy sufficient credit for resourcefulness. He soon discovered something else on which he could chew and he lost no time swinging into action. Having looked to the right and the left and even upward for something to mutilate with his teeth, he decided to look downward. There he found, right at his feet, an electric-light cable.

The circus carries its own power-plant, and this particular cable fed the "juice" that lighted the dressing-rooms. Before I noticed what he was at, Himmy was gnawing away at the cable. He bit deeply into it and a few minutes later he resembled the latest thing in fireworks, the bear sparkler; for sparks were flying all around his head. It all lent a nice Independence Day touch to the spring night, though the shock landed Himmy abruptly on his furry bottom. There he sat, a puzzled expression on his face, regarding this strange new foe. Usually an animal calls it a day when confronted with a situation so completely new that he doesn't know how to handle it. But not Himmy. Before he could be headed off he scrambled to his feet and attacked the enemy anew, doing so thorough a job with his teeth in a second or two that he succeeded in putting out all the lights in the dressing-rooms; which necessitated an emergency repair job, for the show had just started. Many a performer made up that night by candle- and lamp-light, until the cable was fixed.

And there were Pat and Murphy, a pair of bears

I'll never forget. We met, quite informally, while I was playing in Canada some years ago. A big Canuck, wearing what looked like the largest mackinaw in the world, turned up one day at my quarters and announced he wanted to see me. Would I see him? Sure! In he came, and I gasped as I looked at him. His was the most badly scratched face I've ever laid eyes on. I soon saw the reason. In each of the two big pockets of his mackinaw was a bear cub. Would I buy them? Sure!—if the price was reasonable. I gave him twenty dollars for the pair, five dollars more than he asked. This probably sounds like a minor transaction, although I considered it very important at the time, the purchase price representing nearly ten per cent of my worldly possessions. I was just about breaking into the game, and twenty dollars was a lot of money.

Well, those bears grew up and came to be known as the celebrated Clyde Beatty Riding Bears, Never Before Viewed by Mortal Man on Any Stage. And a good act it was, too. I trained Pat and Murphy to ride horses, and it wasn't long before they made some of my equestrian friends look like amateurs. But, being bears, they felt it necessary occasionally to do something surprising. So one day, Pat, representing the team, got it into his head to jump on Jimmy, my bear-boy, at the conclusion of his performance. There was no reason for it except that, bear-fashion, he wanted to startle me and his audience. So, instead of leaping to the floor of the arena, he deliberately leaped on Jimmy, whose shrieks I can still hear. Jimmy, crawling from under his assailant, who made no attempt to attack him, broke all records for dashing from a circus arena into the wide open spaces. The next day, after much effort, I induced

him to return to his job, but Pat again jumped on him, this time almost knocking the lad cold in the process. So Jimmy quit, wisely terminating an unpromising circus career.

And now I'd better quit, before I begin telling you about other bears. They furnish an almost inexhaustible theme. Before you knew it I'd be telling you about the bear that came tearing at me one day, teeth bared, with murder in his eye. He meant to get me; that was plain enough. As he neared me I hauled off and cracked him on the nose. Now, no blow is quite so painful to a bear as a smack on the proboscis. As my fist landed, my assailant went over in a heap and turned a complete somersault. Which gave me an idea: a somersaulting bear would be a real circus feature. And to-day all I have to do to make this same bear turn a somersault is to tap him gently on the nose with a whip.

That—believe it or not—is the origin of the Hagenbeck-Wallace Somersaulting Bear, the only bear known to do this trick. Yes, bears surprise you. In fact, to this day I'm as surprised when the animal turns his somersaults as I was when I was forced to strike him to save myself, and was rewarded by seeing him turn a perfect flip-flop.

## V

*Close Calls*

I HAVE had a good many narrow escapes since the day, over ten years ago, when I joined the A. W. O. L. list of the Chillicothe, Ohio, high school. My ambition was to become a trainer of wild animals. My close calls, if merely tabulated and presented as a list, would make the business of putting lions and tigers through their paces for the entertainment of circus audiences seem the most hazardous in the world. Presented alongside a list of the thousands of performances I've given without mishaps of any kind, my job wouldn't seem quite so dangerous.

I'm not trying to minimize the hazards. The best proof that I selected a risky way of making a living is that I am the only member of the Ringling Brothers-Barnum & Bailey Circus who can secure no life-insurance. Yet accidents rarely occur. I make this point so that the reader will not gain the impression, from this record of some of the occasions on which I have flirted with death, that these are typical, daily experiences. They are not.

After serving an apprenticeship as cage boy and assistant trainer, I finally got a chance to try my hand as full-fledged boss of a mixed group—lions, leopards, and bears. This was back in 1923 when Gollmar Brothers' Circus was wintering at Montgomery, Alabama.

In other words, I was to demonstrate how good I was, without the benefit of an audience.

Chubby Gilfoyle, our chief trainer, had been nursing me along, teaching me the tricks of the trade and encouraging me in my ambition to become a first-class wild-animal showman. I soon found out that I had much to learn—not quite so much in handling the animals as in handling myself. I was overconfident to the point of carelessness. I was so consumed with the idea of showing I wasn't afraid that I wasn't afraid enough.

Your properly cautious trainer wouldn't think of undertaking to work with a mixed group that was new to him without arming himself with a chair—or its equivalent—as a shield for use in warding off attacks. But I couldn't be bothered with such nonsense. Didn't I have a whip in my hand? What more did a fellow need? In I went, walking right past the chair Gilfoyle had left in the arena for my protection. Old-timers like Chubby Gilfoyle might need chairs, but not Clyde Beatty.

My first few minutes in the ring were so peaceful I began to wonder why I had bothered to take the whip. What a vindication of my belief that these cats and bears were a lot of push-overs! Didn't they have any fight in them at all? I very quickly learned that they did; at least one of them had plenty—a lion that thought I was insulting him in turning my back on him as long as I did. My efforts to capture the attention of one of the animals I was facing were interrupted by his leaping for that back of mine. He was determined to remind me of the code of the veldt—that one never turns his back on a gentleman lion.

Struck from behind with complete unexpectedness,

I pitched forward on my face, my assailant on top of me. As I struck the floor I felt the animal's teeth in my right shoulder. Gilfoyle rushed into the ring and drove the lion off, his weapon the very chair I had disdained. Fortunately my assailant was young. An older animal would have put up more of a fight and might have insisted on tearing me up in places. My shoulder still bears the marks of that lion's teeth.

I'll never forget Chubby's gentle reprimand: "You never can afford to be careless with wild animals, especially the cats. I've had years at this game and I know my lions and tigers, but I'd be the last man in the world to bet that an animal won't end my career some day." Those were prophetic words. A few years later Chubby was the victim of a bad attack in the arena. One arm was so badly chewed up it had to be amputated to save his life. Chubby's career as a trainer was over.

During the winter of 1924, I participated in the filming of an animal movie on the Pacific coast. One day we were taking some scenes depicting a number of beasts congregating at a water-hole for a drink. All the animals did as bidden, except a puma, which acted queerly and didn't seem to know what to do. Investigation revealed that the animal was blind. I thought this was sufficient reason for excusing him from further work, but my proposal was vetoed.

Philosophically I decided to do what I could to make that blind puma perform. I tried leading him toward the water-hole by means of a chunk of beef tied to a string. I dragged the beef along the ground and got him headed in the right direction. All would have been well if some one hadn't left a shovel lying around. I

stumbled on it as I moved backward toward the water-hole and went over flat on my back.

My kicking of the shovel and the thud of my fall, combined with the shouts of those who were looking on, undoubtedly frightened the animal. At any rate, he sprang, landing on top of me. Lashing out blindly with one paw, he almost dug into my throat. I jerked away in time, then, reaching out quickly with both hands, I got him around the neck. I still remember the saliva from his mouth dripping down on my face. Before anything further happened one of the animal-men working on the picture with me grabbed the shovel that had spilled me and drove the puma off.

One of the superstitions of the circus world is that the last performance of the season is jinxed. I'm not superstitious, but I must admit that the big top has known many closing-day accidents. I was in one of them. It happened in Shreveport, Louisiana, where I was appearing in the featured animal act with the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus.

As usual, several of my friends in the circus warned me to be careful during that final performance. "You've got to be on your guard on jinx-day," cautioned a veteran equestrian, who proceeded to describe a bad spill he had had on the final day of the season a few years before. Then he added a few gory details about an almost fatal fall that a high-wire artist had had the same day. I promised to be careful. This was easy, for I had reached the stage in my career where caution was my middle name.

One of the best of my big cats was a lioness, Babe, who was trained to make a leap for the door as I made

my exit at the conclusion of my act. It gave the performance a spectacular finish.

All went well with my act. The animals responded beautifully to my commands and the repeated volleys of applause indicated the pleasure of the audience. The act over, I started moving backward toward the door and it was a hundred-to-one shot that I had bested that last-day jinx. Babe came toward me, poising herself for that wind-up leap. The stunt was so timed that as I opened the door and put it between me and the occupants of the ring Babe would bang against it and slam it shut with the force of her jump, giving the impression that I had got out none too soon. This type of showmanship is an essential part of any good animal act. It's the sort of thing that packs 'em in.

As a safeguard against grabbing a section of the steel cage itself, instead of the door whose bars were identical, I had long before hit upon the scheme of having three of the bars of the door painted white. This was an excellent guide for the eye. I could look over my shoulder as I backed out of the arena and know just where to grab the door when I must make a hasty exit. Perfect timing was essential, for Babe was a well-trained animal and if I did not get out of the ring on schedule it meant meeting that charge. And that, of course, meant trouble.

Babe came on toward me to do her stunt in the regular way. Having completed my backward trip to the exit, I reached for the bars. My heart sank as they failed to give. . . . Funny . . . those white bars didn't stand out as they used to. . . . Frantically I tugged away. The bars held firm. I gave another panicky yank, hold-

ing my chair out firmly to meet the charge in the split second it took me to realize that I was trapped.

With one powerful sweep of the paw the onrushing Babe knocked the chair out of my hand. I blazed away with my blank-cartridge pistol, momentarily stopping her, then made for a big pedestal near the door and got behind it. Bredo, a big male lion, came tearing after me. As I stood there, slumped down behind the metal perch, my new assailant came at me from the right side. To protect my face I threw up an arm, preferring to let him have that rather than my face. But when he made for my arm I instinctively jerked it back.

At this point I was saved by Equestrian Director Hauser, who is keenly interested in wild animals and who always watches my act. You will remember how he came to my rescue before. Again ready with a pole, he had it through the bars in a jiffy, beating my assistant to it. My man, a fraction of a second later, joined Hauser in poking away with a pole and they soon drove the animal off. I had concentrated so hard on Bredo's movements that I had not noticed Babe, who now, having recovered from the "blanking" I had given her, made for me from the left! She dug a claw into my leg as Hauser came up, but the injury was not a serious one. She, too, was driven off by the men with the poles.

Using a pedestal as a shield, I cautiously worked my way to the door, Hauser and my assistant standing by, ready to help. This time the door yielded and I was safe. What happened when I reached for the door the first time was that my eye played a trick on me. The season nearly over, the once white stripes that had always served as my guide were now more of a dirty gray.

They did not stand out sufficiently and in my haste I grabbed the wrong bars.

Sap, Boob, and Dumb-bell were the three dumbest animals I have ever handled. They were hyenas, particularly stupid members of a stupid species. No animal that the trainer has to cope with is quite so hopelessly slow-witted as a hyena.

When Sap, Boob, and Dumb-bell (they quickly earned their names) came to America from Asia about seven years ago they were turned over to me at the winter quarters of the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus in Peru, Indiana. There's no intelligence test for animal immigrants or this trio of dullards would never have been allowed to land. Instant deportation on grounds of acute moronism would have been decreed.

From the appearance of these poor devils when they arrived one would never have suspected them of trouble-making possibilities. They were painfully skinny, as animals frequently are after a long ocean voyage. I turned the trio loose in the arena to get a good look at them before starting their education as performers. I was called away after I put them in the ring and on my return a few minutes later they were gone! They were so thin that they had managed to slip out of the ring. There was a place where some bars had sprung and the hyenas had squeezed through. They finally made their way to the cat-barn, where I quickly rounded them up.

I decided that it wouldn't be fair to put such rundown specimens to work and devoted myself to fattening them up before making them earn their keep. The

hyena is a vicious animal. For sheer malevolence, it outdoes anything of its size and weight. Once my trio of nitwits regained their strength, they rounded into mid-season form as snappers and snarlers.

The jaw of the hyena is one of the deadliest weapons the animal kingdom knows, and for this reason I had to be careful. Considering the creature's size, its jaw is incredibly powerful. I know of a case where a hyena snapped a man's shin-bone (the rascal's favorite objective) in two as though it were made of peanut brittle.

There is a mistaken theory that well-fed animals are not dangerous. One so-called authority—a veritable mine of misinformation on circus topics—has announced to the world that performing animals are always fed before entering the arena so that they will not want to convert their trainer into lunch or dinner. That is pure bunk. I feed my animals once a day—right after the matinée performance.

The amateur zoölogist always bases his theories regarding the reason why wild animals attack on the premise that food is the chief motivating factor. In no arena tragedy with which I am familiar has the attacking animal shown the slightest interest in his victim as food. My hyenas were much more vicious after plenty of good raw meat had restored their energies.

I'll never forget the work I put in, trying to get something through the heads of that trio. First I worked on Sap. I put a collar on him to which a chain was fastened. A rope that close to his mouth would not have lasted long. He would have quickly snapped it in two. A rope, however, was fastened to the end of the chain. This was manipulated by an assistant who was planted outside the arena. The assistant would yank

away until Sap was near the pedestal and then I would try to make the animal understand that he was expected to clamber up on this perch. Sap thought I wanted him to upset the pedestal and set to work with a right good will to accomplish this end. After days of perspiring effort I finally taught him that his stunt was to light on the pedestal, not to knock it over.

The next stage was to turn Sap loose and see if he couldn't remember to take the hop that would land him on the pedestal without a jerking rope to serve as a reminder. Good old Chubby Gilfoyle was outside the arena the day I tried it first. Chubby had been of considerable help to me in the assembling of the performing group of which these hyenas were to be a part. The other animals were pumas, leopards, bears, and German police dogs.

I turned Sap loose. For thirty seconds at a stretch he did what was expected of him, which is a long time for a hyena to click. Then I gave him another cue which he interpreted as an invitation to snap my leg in two. He came tearing at me. Gilfoyle let out a yelp of dismay as the animal sunk his teeth into my leg midway between the ankle and the knee. I let out . . . a laugh! Before turning the animal loose I had taken the precaution of wrapping several layers of a heavy close-mesh chicken wire around my legs, under my trousers. A retired animal expert had warned me of the hyena's fondness for snapping shin-bones.

I continued to laugh as I drove off the puzzled Sap, and Chubby, rushing into the ring to save me, exclaimed, "Because you're handling hyenas is no reason why you should laugh like one." I always considered it his best line.

Sap continued to be a sap. In fact, one day he almost spoiled the show by forgetting to enter the arena during a performance. He lingered behind after Boob and Dumb-bell had trotted out through the tunnel. The leopards entered the arena next and an astonished audience was treated to the rare sight of one of the leopards dragging Sap into the ring. The leopard was a friendly chap who liked me, and I suppose I might assume that when he dragged that hyena into the big cage he was trying to be of help to me. But my attitude toward animals prevents me from believing anything like that. Also I can't ignore the fact that the leopard didn't let go of Sap after he had brought the hyena on; I had to persuade him to relax his jaws. Take my word for it: that spotted cat was not motivated by a sentimental wish to be of service to his master!

The most sensational happening of my career was my experience on January 13, 1932, when I was attacked by Nero, who figured so largely in Chapter III. I have been asked several times by magazines to tell, in my own words, what happened on that fateful day, and I welcome the opportunity of doing so now. The newspapers all over the country told the story, but they couldn't possibly have told the whole of it, for the simple reason that two hours after the accident occurred I was battling for my life in a hospital and therefore was hardly in a position to state certain essential facts.

The scene is again the winter headquarters of the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus at Peru, Indiana. To avoid confusing the reader, let me point out that while I appear with the Ringling Brothers-Barnum & Bailey Circus as its featured performer in such cities as New

York and Boston, I am regularly attached to the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus. The two organizations are under the same management.

I was putting my lions and tigers through their paces and about two dozen people were looking on. Nero was going over the hurdle. Instead of making a clean jump, the big creature suddenly swerved in his course and came right at me. I could see he meant business. It was one of those determined charges that an experienced trainer recognizes instantly. The first thing I knew I was flat on my back on the floor of the arena, with the lion standing over me. Just when I lost my chair I don't recall.

It was the worst moment I have ever known. Nero is as powerful a lion as I have ever seen, and here was his chance to get me if that was his pleasure. As the big lion bent over me and bared the teeth with which he planned to mess up my features, I reached up with my right hand and planted it against his upper lip and nose. Then, with superhuman strength born of desperation, I shoved him away from me, actually succeeding in working him back as far as my arm could reach. He gave his head a snap to release himself from my palm-hold and as he did I found my hand in his mouth up to the wrist! I yanked it out in a hurry, scraping off patches of skin against his teeth.

I don't understand to this day why he failed to bite the whole hand off. Certainly his subsequent conduct does not indicate that it was due to any desire to let me off lightly. I believe he was rattled by the unexpectedness of my defense.

He did not make for my face again, contenting himself with seizing what was nearest him. That happened

to be the upper part of my leg. He grabbed it midway between the hip and the knee and tightened his jaws as if determined to snap the member in two. Having dug his teeth in deeply enough to satisfy himself (it developed later that they had sunk right into the bone), he began to drag me. After he had dragged me about two yards he suddenly let go and made for a near-by lioness. The attack was over as fast as it had begun.

What saved me was the fact that he happened to move in the direction of a lioness that was on his mind. He had forgotten her momentarily in his determination to get me, but now that he was near her again he remembered that she was his main concern. It was only this that saved me from being torn to pieces. The attendants outside the cage, frantically working their poles and yelling in an effort to distract the beast, had little effect on him. There was nothing else they could do. It would have amounted to suicide to enter the ring and try to fight him off.

It is my belief that the animal's attack on me had its roots in the fact that I had been standing near the female that had captured his interest. Her presence excited him. In a situation of this kind an animal is capable of honest-to-goodness jealousy. If I had been another male lion, Nero could not have regarded my closeness to his mate more suspiciously.

Despite the fact that antitoxin was immediately administered, a serious infection resulted. Late that afternoon I had a raging fever. The speed with which my temperature mounted was a sure sign of real trouble.

About five days later I was carried to the operating-room of Duke's Memorial Hospital, where I was taken after the accident, and told that to save my life my leg

must be amputated. I pleaded with the doctors not to remove it unless the operation was absolutely necessary. A specialist who was called in had a hunch that perhaps the leg could be saved. At any rate, he recommended an operation designed to locate the pus sac that was causing the trouble. He found it somewhere between the knee and the hip, and his operation started me on the road to recovery. I was on my back for ten weeks and at one time my wound was draining through six tubes.

This is being written several months after my discharge from the hospital. My leg isn't quite right yet and I have to favor it, but it is steadily improving and one of these days I'll have no more twinges to remind me of Nero's attack—just the scars.

Nero is in my act as of old and a better-behaved lion you have never seen.

## VI

### *Dressing-room*

**B**E IT never so humble, there's no place like home. My home, during the months when the circus is on the road, is my "dressing-room." And my dressing-room is a big circus wagon. Its exterior is all covered with red and gold paint, gaudy enough to serve as one of the units in an old-time circus parade down Main Street. Its interior is as plain as that of any ordinary moving-van.

The furnishings consist of a rude dressing-table, a mirror, a big strong table on which I stretch out for my alcohol rub-down after every performance in the arena, and a half-dozen kitchen chairs—the very ones I use in my act. There is one enormous theatrical trunk, filled with uniforms, pistols, ammunition, and paraphernalia. The front wall of the room is crowded with whips—thirty or forty of them, some ready for use, others waiting for repairs. Whips wear out very rapidly under the kind of treatment I give them in the cage.

Across the middle of the van is a clothes-line, usually adorned with a couple of uniforms drying. I use a fresh duck uniform every time I go into the cage, and come back to my dressing-room with it so soiled that it is the despair of the lad who has to wash it and get it ready for its next appearance.

The doorway of my dressing-room is the whole back

of the van, always kept wide open for ventilation. Such privacy as is possible has to be obtained by means of a curtain drawn across this opening. The "room" is entered by means of a short ladder, guarded in somewhat indifferent fashion by Joe, my "dressing-room boy," who also washes the uniforms, repairs the whips and chairs, assists me in my preparations, keeps track of all my equipment, and runs my errands.

There is really no privacy in circus life. People come and go through my dressing-room in a constant stream—visitors, employees, newspaper people, souvenir-hunters, salesmen, students, and "just plain nuts." I wish I had a dollar for every person who has burst in on me during my rub-down; and somehow I always feel as if I had a right to be alone with my rubber. About the only time I have any real privacy is when I'm inside the big cage with my pets. Then, at least, even my best friends prefer to remain outside.

But I'm not complaining about the crowd that flows through my dressing-room. They're part of the charm of circus life. I've made more friends in that wagon than I could in a thousand years of ordinary civilian life in a city apartment or a suburban cottage.

Perhaps the best of my visitors are the old-timers. My wagon has somehow come to be the hang-out for all those charming people who have been connected with the circus since time immemorial. Here they congregate and swap yarns, reminiscences, and the gossip of the road. Many of them are disciples of Baron Munchausen, who have learned to add splendidly fantastic embellishments to the most ordinary narrative. They are at their best, of course, when they hold forth

## THE BIG CAGE

on the subject of wild animals, for with wild animals it is an accepted hypothesis that nothing is impossible. Get them started on blood-curdling animal stories, and they'll soon put your wildest imaginings to shame. Try them on narrow escapes, and you'll find that every one of them has been through experiences that make Jack the Giant Killer seem a piker.

Another type of visitor that I always like is the reporter. Newspaper people and I invariably get along well together. On the road I am interviewed constantly, and I never tire of the reporters' questions. Every newspaper man or woman seems to have a fresh point of view. I learn fully as much from them as they do from me. They represent my audience, and constant contact with them keeps me informed of the things that my audiences are saying and asking. There's no danger of my act going stale as long as I can have, day after day, the reactions of newspaper people with their amazingly curious, inquiring minds.

Animal fans, both young and old, frequently force their way into my dressing-room, although Joe is supposed to keep them out—not because I don't want to see them, but because there are only twenty-four hours in a day, and preference must be given to people with more important claims on my time. Nevertheless, a lot of them get past Joe. Some of them are boys and girls. Some are older people, often authorities on some branch or other of animal lore. There are school-teachers, lecturers, clergymen, presidents of Rotary Clubs, college professors, hunters and trappers, explorers, and many others, who contrive to persuade Joe that their knowledge of animals entitles them to admission.

Some of those who come to ask questions are satisfied

with interviewing Joe, who really has a surprising repertoire of answers to most of the stock questions. At one time I had a dressing-room assistant named Tom, whom the circus people called "the Wise Man" because he had a phenomenally high forehead. He was a constant source of embarrassment to me because he was always volunteering misinformation to animal fans. A college professor, who was waiting for me one evening, talked with Tom for fifteen minutes and aptly characterized him afterward in a sentence which has given me many a laugh. "Your assistant," he said, "possesses the largest capacity for ignorance I have ever encountered."

I have found that most animal fans are interesting. Their questions are seldom foolish ones. In fact, I find that even school-boys who are persistent enough to get to my dressing-room have an analytical attitude toward animals that evidences a good deal of keen study and thought. Of course it is true that the questions these fans ask are pretty much alike. In part at least, their questions were the inspiration for this book, and my effort in writing it has been to stick as closely as possible to the things they have asked about.

Not all my callers are welcome. I could do very well without any further visits from strangers who burst into my dressing-room with a bottle of some alcoholic beverage, as if the greatest honor that could be conferred upon me was the privilege of drinking with them. I am no strait-laced Puritan, but I'm sure nobody will misunderstand me when I say that the best use to be made of alcohol in my dressing-room is its external application in my rub-down.

One of the great American pests who is always turning up in circus dressing-rooms is the salesman. Why anybody should expect to sell me a vacuum cleaner or an adding machine I don't know. Book agents seem to regard me as their natural prey, and itinerant venders of fifteen-dollar tailor-made suits, of shirts and haberdashery, of genuine Hoboken Oriental rugs, or correspondence courses in how to become a big executive, never pass me by.

"Society" once honored me in a way that annoyed me at the time. In retrospect the incident amuses me. Perhaps I was annoyed because my visitor—a well-padded dowager—pushed into my dressing-room while I was lying on the rubbing table after a particularly hard tussle in the arena. My rubber hastily covered me with a towel, but even so, I felt that I was at a distinct disadvantage with this large lady in velvet.

She seemed very much offended that I was not dressed to receive her, ignoring the fact that she had given me no warning of her approach.

"I'll wait outside," she said frigidly, after informing me of her official standing in the town. "And please hurry, as I have a very important question to ask you!"

I told the rubber to go on with his work. Twice in the next ten minutes she sent one of the circus hands in to command me to hurry. I had a bad strain or two that I wanted thoroughly rubbed, but after her second message I resignedly told the rubber to let me up, so that I could dress and go out to Her Ladyship.

I found her pacing up and down, outside the entrance, evidently angry at my delay. I made some sort of apology, which she cut short.

"I want you to tell me," she said with an air of authority, "how to cure my dog."

I tried to tell her that I was not a veterinary, nor a specialist in dogs. If it had been a lion, for instance, I might have been helpful.

"That's just it," she cried eagerly. "It's a poodle, you know, and its name is Lion—because it looks just like one. So I'm sure you'll know what to do!" She went into details as to her pet's illness, which was of some considerable duration, and as to its present symptoms. "The dear little thing is terribly constipated," she said, ignoring my blushes. "I can't understand it, either, because I've been putting a lot of bran in his food. I'm beginning to think bran is a fake, Mr. Beatty. What do you think of bran?"

I started to stammer a non-committal reply, but she ignored me and switched into a discussion of a neighbor's dog which was suffering from trouble similar to that of her Lion.

"Now, you mustn't tell me to go to a veterinary," she said, "because I don't believe in them. They may know a lot about horses, but I'm sure they're frightfully ignorant about dogs. 'Veterinary' means 'horse doctor,' doesn't it, Mr. Beatty? It can't possibly mean 'dog doctor,' can it?"

I took time out to glare at Joe, who had let this lady go up the ladder in the first place. He had strict instructions not to let any one in until after I had finished my rub-down, but he was always making exceptions.

The dowager went on and on. "Now what would you do, Mr. Beatty, if one of your lions was that way?" she finally asked, with a gesture which made "that

way" refer to all the symptoms she had described.

"I think I'd give him castor-oil," I said, grasping at a straw, in hopes that some sort of definite recommendation would satisfy her. All things considered, it seemed to me that castor-oil was a pretty safe remedy to suggest. I had never heard of castor-oil doing any particular harm.

"Oh, I believe that's just the thing!" she said delightedly. "I was sure you'd know what to do. And I'm so grateful. If ever there's anything I can do for you, Mr. Beatty, I want you to come right to me and ask it. And if you are back here next year, I want you to call and see Lion. I'd ask you to come up to-night, but the dear little thing is feeling too ill to have any company."

Among my "crank" visitors, a fairly frequent one is the reformer who accuses me of torturing my pets. An example of this type was an elderly gentleman who called on me in my dressing-room in a midwestern city. He was the active head of the local "humane society," he explained, and I'd have to stop beating my animals with those terrible whips, he added, pointing to the rack of whips which he had immediately spotted along the front wall of the wagon. He had just seen my afternoon performance, and every time he had heard me crack a whip, it had made him shudder.

I explained that the very fact a whip cracks is proof it has hit nothing. If anybody actually lashes an animal, the only noise made by the whip is a dull cutting sound, and you'd have to be very close to the arena to hear it. The humane society factotum was not to be put off with any such explanation.

"If you think you can pull the wool over my eyes,

young man," he said in a tone of grave reprimand, "you're mistaken! I know when animals are being beaten. Their faces indicate that they're being lashed, and that they're in terrible pain. And if you think you can get away with anything like that in my town, you're a simpleton."

I told him, as politely as possible, that a trainer doesn't get results by beating his animals, that patience and kindness are the most important factors in making animals do your bidding.

"Patience and kindness!" he sniffed. "Poppycock! You're a fine one to be talking about patience and kindness!" And for about three minutes I heard myself being called, in a dozen different ways, the meanest man in the world.

As my accuser's whole argument was built around my whips, which to him were irrefutable symbols of cruelty, I invited him to step outside on the circus lot, so that I could give him a demonstration of whip-cracking and show him how mistaken he was.

"I'll make my whip crack within six inches of your nose," I suggested. "All you have to do is stand there when it happens; you won't feel a thing!"

I went on to explain that the whole purpose of cracking my whip was to get the attention of my animals, and make them concentrate on the job in hand.

He wouldn't listen to reason, and he wanted no demonstration. He knew cruelty when he saw it; one look at me was enough to satisfy him as to my character. And he would take steps to insure that I never gave a performance in his town again.

"You can keep your silly demonstration!" he shrilled, shaking a long skinny finger in my face. "No circus

faking for me! I know what you'd do, all right: you'd substitute a harmless whip for the one you torture your animals with. There ought to be a law against people like you!"

I wound up by inviting this irrational reformer to leave my dressing-wagon. He backed out, red-faced but still spouting forth his accusations. The last remarks I heard had something to do with the Spanish Inquisition.

Now, I am completely sympathetic with the fine purpose of those who dedicate themselves to the prevention of cruelty to animals. I might even be so bold as to claim to be one of them. My lions and tigers are better cared for, in captivity, than they could possibly be in their native jungle. They will live much longer than their average jungle brother. There is no roughness in the handling of them, except when it is necessary to use emergency measures to protect them or to protect the people around them.

Some of the "humane" reformers don't realize this. Some of them, in fact, are blind, unreasoning fanatics who, in their zeal to tell their own story, are unwilling to listen to anybody else's. They are ignorant, and—worse still—ignorant of their own ignorance. They lack the saving grace of tolerance. Such "reformers" should develop a capacity for listening to the other fellow's story. Perhaps they might even start their editing of the human race by improving themselves.

Another type of pest that is always to be found hanging around circus dressing-rooms is the advertising solicitor for various obscure (and even non-existent)

publications. Usually they are interested in some kind of "special edition" which is about to appear, and their sales talk bristles with the compelling importance of this special edition to the future of the circus performer who is their immediate object of attack.

Frequently these buncombe artists are armed with a suggested advertisement, which is generally called an "announcement."

"Announcement of what?" I asked one of these gentry the other day.

"Well, this is an announcement in which you greet your public," replied the solicitor, suavely, showing a neatly printed proof of a full-page of display type. My name was in letters two inches high, and beneath this was the following statement, in the blackest type I have ever seen:

"The world's greatest animal-tamer takes this opportunity to greet his public and thank them for their support of his wonderful act."

I might have smiled a little at the lack of modesty and the evident bad taste of the whole thing, if it hadn't been for that phrase "animal-tamer" in the first line. If there is anything that makes my blood boil, it is to be called an "animal-tamer." However, I swallowed hard and restrained myself, while I read on. The announcement suddenly shifted from the third person approach to a first person attack in the second sentence:

"I thank you for turning out in droves to see my act. I appreciate your marvelous and overwhelming support. My lions thank you. My tigers thank you. My bears thank you. My elephants thank you. And I thank you again myself, from the bottom of my heart."

I had to grin when I got to the line about the animals thanking everybody. That was what one of my favorite authors would call "too mutch."

The solicitor misunderstood my grin. He thought I was pleased, and immediately offered me a fountain-pen and a contract, using a slightly soiled thumb to point out the dotted line.

I don't recall how much I was asked to pay for the publication of this particular masterpiece. I remember, however, that the price included delivery to me personally of one hundred de luxe copies to send to my special friends.

I didn't have much money at the time, but I'd have given the better part of it, if necessary, to keep an advertisement like that out of print. I was on the point of saying so, but hastily restrained myself, fearing that my caller might make a sudden right-about-face and actually demand a price for not printing it. So, diplomatically, I professed a great interest, and asked him to leave the sample advertisement with me, so that I might get the approval of the circus advertising manager. My contract, I explained apologetically, was unfortunately worded so that I was compelled to submit all advertising to the management.

My ire at being called an "animal-tamer" is due to the fact that I do not believe in taming wild animals, even if it were possible. And it is seldom possible with the giant cats, which have a way of going bad and attacking their trainer, for no apparent reason, even after performing satisfactorily for years. I have never handled in my various acts a single lion, tiger, or leopard that could be classified as "tame"; and that

goes even for the ones with the so-called "pleasant dispositions."

Another thing about the advertisement that annoyed me was the ignorance of the solicitor in referring to my bears and elephants. At this particular time, several years had elapsed since I had worked in any arena with either a bear or an elephant. Nobody with the slightest degree of current information about the circus business would have pulled a boner like that.

Finally, there was a real laugh in the advertisement's reference to the public coming in "droves" to see my act. It so happened that our circus had been doing very poor business for the previous two weeks, and we were all very much worried and even touchy about any reference to the size of our crowds.

These advertising solicitors must find circus people a fairly gullible lot, for they continue to ply their business energetically, and some of them look sleek and prosperous. Perhaps the sleekest of them are those who offer space in foreign amusement journals. Circus performers seem to have an uncontrollable ambition to be known in Germany, France, and Italy. What's behind it, I don't know. Certainly the number of American performers who actually get an opportunity to tour the foreign capitals is very small, and in most cases the monetary results are microscopic, or worse. But there you are: offer the average animal man a chance to "greet" his public in Germany or Czechoslovakia or even Lithuania, through the pages of a probably mythical publication, and he's likely to part with real money and even be happy about it.

I was visited once by a long-haired Russian who

offered, for only fifty dollars, to give me a quarter-page in a forthcoming Moscow "special edition," so that my lions and tigers could thank their Russian public. Again I fell back upon that non-existent clause in my contract requiring me to get the approval of my management.

Thank Heaven, all my dressing-room callers aren't like that. If they were, I'd have the entrance carefully paved with banana peels. My most interesting callers, by and large, are the newspaper reporters. I kept count during one full month on the road, and found that I had been "interviewed" for publication exactly sixty-eight times. I often wish that I had been able to keep a copy of all the things that have been written about me. What a souvenir that collection of scrap-books would be! But I'm afraid my clipping bills would have made too much of a dent in my salary.

Moreover, the interviews would pretty much fall into a few well-worn patterns. Probably the most numerous classification of clippings would be my answers to questions about the use of a "hypnotic eye" in making animals behave. Somebody is always bringing up that question. Apparently millions of people still believe that animals can be cowed by looking 'em square in the eye and outstaring them!

Because of this quaint legend, numerous newspaper photographers have been sent to my dressing-room to take snap-shots of my eyes. One New York paper devoted a half-page of pictures to this portion of my anatomy, purporting to show that this was the whole secret of my act.

As a matter of fact, the "hypnotic eye" is pure, unalloyed bunk. Trainers for years have made a practice

of staring straight into the eyes of the animals that they work at close range. I do it myself. It is part of the stage setting, however. It has no effect on the animal. It is just an effective trick of showmanship. I'm all for showmanship. Audiences respond to it. But I want it known that when I make an animal do my bidding, it isn't because my eyes are looking into his.

The "outstaring" business gives the audience the impression of a contest between the trainer and the animal; it's a game, to find out whose nerve will break first. And when the beast, after a few seconds of this eye-to-eye stuff, is cued to do his particular stunt, and does it, the audience applauds.

The trick is justified, not only because the effect is good, but also because it takes real nerve to get down on one knee—which is usually part of the procedure—and look straight into the eyes of a lion or a tiger that is only a foot or two away, and that may be planning some devilment for the next moment.

"It's his eyes," writes one newspaper reporter with pardonable colloquialism, "that make it possible for him to make savage lions and tigers mount their pedestals and remain there in reluctant quiet until the time comes for them to perform their individual acts. There is a hypnotic quality in those eyes which bends every lion and tiger to do his bidding."

Sounds well, doesn't it? But not very plausible when you remember that there are forty animals in my full act, ranged around the arena on seats of different heights and covering a considerable part of a pretty big circle. Several of these animals are behind my back. I would have to have a couple of hypnotic eyes in the back of my head, and some more arranged along the

sides, in order to keep my forty pets "bent," as the reporter phrases it.

I'm not criticizing the reporter. As a matter of fact, he and I had enjoyed quite a frank discussion of the "hypnotic eye" that very morning. He had accepted my explanation that animal-training had nothing to do with any supernatural powers or strange gifts of hypnosis. "But," said he, "people like to think so, and they'd be disappointed if I told 'em they're wrong about it. They wouldn't enjoy your act half so much if I was able to convince them that you depend solely upon an exhaustive knowledge of animals and their reactions."

Of course I don't entirely agree with him. It would be no feat at all to put a cageful of wild animals through their paces if the trainer could really hypnotize them. Knowledge is the only really interesting magic.

Perhaps there is a certain intangible something in the process by which an animal-trainer develops his self-assurance and his powers of bluffing to the point where he can actually convince an arena full of wild animals that he is mightier than they. But that is the only hypnosis in the profession, and it is not the variety that circus-goers have in mind when they endow him with a magic eye. It is not what newspaper interviewers write about or photographers seek to portray in their enormously enlarged pictures of my eyes.

A new class of interviewers which have sprung up in the past few years are the representatives of school and college papers, or students in schools of journalism preparing practice themes for the class room. They are becoming almost as numerous as the autograph-

collectors. One of them who came to my dressing-room a few weeks ago was the son of Ed Wynn, and I was interested in talking to him because his father is a friend of mine, and I wondered whether the son was as smart as the father. I didn't really arrive at any decision, but I was quickly satisfied that the son was no dunce, for his questions were as keen and intelligent as those of many a reporter, and I'm sure he must have written a very entertaining and interesting article for the monthly paper of the Horace Mann School, where he is a student.

"What's the biggest thrill you ever had?" was one of his questions. He also asked about the "hypnotic eye," and we both had a good laugh when I explained it in terms of some of his father's favorite stunts of stage showmanship. "Your father uses it on the audience instead of on animals," I suggested. The son agreed with a grin. "He also uses it on the family sometimes," he declared.

It was a young woman interviewer from a college paper that showed her keenness by carefully counting the number of animals in the arena during my act, before interviewing me, and found a discrepancy with the advertised "forty" that had been billed all over the country-side.

"I wonder," she said, very politely, "if your advertising is quite truthful, Mr. Beatty? The bill-boards promise forty animals, but there were only thirty-six in the arena this afternoon."

I complimented her on her mathematical ability. It's not easy to count those animals, as anybody will find who tries it. Sometimes it seems as if there were a hundred of them.

Her question gave me a chance to explain that the number of animals in the arena at my performances varies somewhat, owing to illness, accidents, fights, and the absences due to breeding. The lowest number of actors on the stage last summer was thirty-two; that was a week when I had a number of cripples on my hands, together with two animals who had been a little too unruly and who therefore were being held out of the act until they got over their tantrums.

Women interviewers are inclined to be a little more daring and unconventional in their questioning than the men reporters. A good many of them show the surprising temerity of wanting to be photographed in the cage with me, during the act. Perhaps they don't realize how dangerous this might prove. One young woman reporter, who wore a very attractive leopard-skin coat, asked if she couldn't wear it in the cage for a photograph. I declined the suggestion, suspecting that my animals might pick out that coat as a special object of attack.

Only on very rare occasions do I permit any strangers to enter the cage. My main objection to taking them is that the animals are likely to be made nervous by any innovation in their regular program. Their reactions to ordinary routine happenings and people are hard enough to figure, but when it comes to guessing what they'll do under unusual conditions—it just can't be done. And I feel much safer dealing with them alone than with one or two other people to protect in addition to myself.

## VII

### *Arena Feuds*

**G**RUDGES are not uncommon among animals in the training ring. Sometimes these grudges develop into real feuds, inter-arena breaches that are never healed.

Once when I was working a big polar-bear act, a feature of it was what is known in the circus world as a "teeter-totter." This, in layman's language, is a seesaw stunt. The teeter-totter was worked by five bears. An animal stood at each end of a seesaw board and one in the middle. On the floor of the arena, one at the right end of the board and the other at the left, I stationed a pair of polars who were trained to move the board up and down with their paws. The stunt was a big success. Women and children were particularly keen about it. It was one of those sure-fire things that always get a hand.

My most reliable teeter-totter performer was a polar bear named Oswald. He occupied one of the two key positions: in other words, he was one of the "end men" that worked the board up and down. The bears *on* the board were not nearly so important. The success of the act depended largely upon the end men, and Oswald was the better of the two. He seemed to give confidence to his co-propeller on the other end.

All would have been well if Oswald hadn't fallen out with Frisky, another bear in my troupe. Frisky was

not a participant in the teeter-totter act. He did other tricks; and during the teeter-totter business he was merely "atmosphere," along with nine other bears. These animals, ranged around the arena on pedestals, gave the audience so much more polar bear to look at.

I don't know what started the Frisky-Oswald feud. It soon became serious, with Frisky the aggressor. As he was the larger and more powerful of the two, Oswald had plenty to worry about. Oswald had a quicker intelligence, but this merely made him a better performer. In his tussles with Frisky, he lost out time and again, the latter's superior strength and his habit of attacking suddenly—often from behind—being the deciding factors.

Frisky didn't confine his annoying of Oswald to the teeter-totter performance. He would wait until I got all the bears on their pedestals to form the pyramid that was one of the features and then make a sudden assault on my talented end man, rushing for Oswald and dragging the teeter-totter bear off his pedestal. He seemed most to enjoy doing this when the audience started applauding the pyramid. Once Frisky timed his attack so perfectly that poor bewildered Oswald came flying off his pedestal with the first hand-clap. Frisky chased my end man all around the arena. After the third lap the audience broke into wild applause, thinking this was a stunt I had staged. But eventually Frisky caught up with Oswald and chewed up the enemy's hind legs pretty thoroughly—one reason why I didn't care so much about that applause.

After two or three such fiascos I began to wonder if it would not be necessary to take either Oswald or Frisky out of the act. Oswald was the more valuable

performer; I had no understudy for him and it would have taken weeks, perhaps months, to train another animal to take his place in the teeter-totter. I considered dropping Frisky, but I am always unwilling to let so spirited an animal go. I tried stationing the enemies at points in the arena that put the greatest possible distance between them. For three days I congratulated myself on having reached an ingenious and effective solution of the problem; and then the warfare began anew.

This time Frisky succeeded in completely breaking up the act, for the first time since I had assembled it. For the sake of variety, on the occasion to which I refer, this trouble-making polar bear, after dragging his enemy off the latter's pedestal, forced Oswald to retreat to the narrow stretch between the pedestals and the bars of the arena. In the ensuing chase, the pursuer and the pursued knocked over pedestal after pedestal. The bears that were rudely knocked off their perches manifested their displeasure by indiscriminate attacks on both Frisky and Oswald, and before I knew it I had a free-for-all in the arena.

Even the animals that hadn't been upset joined in; for a polar bear in close proximity to a scrap is temperamentally unfitted for the rôle of conscientious objector, and in no time at all the ring was the darnedest jumble of scrapping bears mortal man has ever seen. And if any of the animals knew what he was fighting about, I'll eat Section A of any steel arena in the circus world.

It was a swell scrap, but it was hardly a helpful one. Six of my polars emerged from it badly chewed, and the circus manager—with understandable irritation—

wanted to know whether that Beatty guy did or didn't have his animals under control. After all, there are more effective finishes to an animal act than a free-for-all, and I would not have thought of trying to convince any one that I had displayed any epoch-making wizardry in handling my white-furred charges. True, I had not been a full-fledged trainer very long, but one can't go around explaining that to each member of an audience. In other words, I looked pretty sour that day; and the more valiantly good-natured friends strove to convince me that I wasn't to blame, the more sure I felt I must have seemed downright poor. Of course it wasn't my fault. What animal-trainer hasn't had his mishaps? Just the same, while the trainer is having these mishaps he feels rather sick about 'em. It matters not whose fault it is, it's the net result that he remembers.

As far as the Frisky-Oswald combination was concerned, I was perfectly willing to admit defeat, and I took Frisky out of the act. He was placed in the menagerie with the show's exhibit animals. After a month of this life he was a much chastened bear, no longer his old lively self. In fact, he seemed so sluggish and so lacking in spirit that I began to feel sorry for him.

I knew that a return to the arena would make a new bear of Frisky. The company of his old pals and the exercise he got during each performance would do wonders for him. For days I debated whether to take another chance on the rascal. I admitted to myself that it would do my heart good to see him go shooting down the "bear slide" again. This was the part of the act that he always enjoyed most—with the exception, of course, of annoying Oswald.

The bear slide was an ordinary smooth-surface incline such as is used in children's playgrounds. At the rear of the slide, where it was elevated, there was a ladder up which the bears climbed. One by one my whole group of polars would ascend this ladder and go sliding down the polished board. The stunt always brought peals of laughter from children in the audience. Frisky was so fond of the slide that, in the days when I had him in the act, he could hardly wait for his turn to go down it.

One day when Frisky looked particularly mournful in his lonely home in the menagerie, I weakened and decided to take him back, on trial. All went serenely until the sliding stunt came. To protect Oswald, I sent Frisky down the board first and then chased him to his pedestal. I placed Oswald in the middle of the line so that there would be plenty of bears ahead of him and plenty behind him.

Frisky had shown such humility from the moment he entered the arena that I was taken off guard. When Oswald's turn came to go down the slide, Frisky leaped into action. In a flash he elbowed out of the way the bear that was supposed to follow Oswald and went scooting down after the animal he had persecuted over so long a period.

Oswald must have expected trouble, for to my astonishment I saw that he had let himself down on the board so that his head was toward the top of the incline instead of his tail, and he made his descent on his stomach. He was evidently prepared for an assault from behind!

Down went the two bears, Oswald keeping his eyes glued on the rapidly advancing form of his one-time

tormentor. They landed in a heap at the bottom of the slide. Oswald was ready for Frisky. Full of fight, the under dog took the offensive for the first time since this feud started, and attacked in earnest. Oswald got in the first bite and an effective bite it was, too. He was lucky enough to grab his persecutor by the nose, that most sensitive spot. Frisky emitted an anguished grunt. Oswald dug in harder and Frisky was now having the sourest moment of his career as a performer. Whirling desperately, he shook himself loose and took to his heels, Oswald after him. Around the arena they went, Frisky showing no signs of putting up a fight.

The remaining bears had stopped sliding when Frisky and Oswald went down in a heap. The animal whose turn it was next had stood on top of the slide, as if in a reverie, watching the hostilities below. However, when Oswald began chasing Frisky around the arena, vacating the space at the foot of the slide, the bear at the top took his slide and the others followed suit.

When the activities on the incline were well under way it suddenly occurred to Frisky that perhaps he could get away from Oswald, who was beginning to overtake him in their second lap around the arena, by going down the slide once more. He made for the ladder, Oswald close behind him. A bear was sliding down and two others were at the top of the ladder, waiting to go. In his mad haste the ex-bully knocked the two animals off their perch, sending them crashing to the floor of the arena before they knew what was happening to them.

Oswald, still rampaging, went tearing up after the enemy, gaining on him in the race. Frisky beat his

antagonist to it by a split second, but that was not a sufficient margin of safety, for Oswald fairly catapulted himself down the incline. His descent was so rapid that he was able to grab Frisky from behind with his teeth as the former cock-o'-the-walk landed on the arena floor. Frisky grunted his distress—acute distress, I might say—as Oswald grabbed him by the neck. It looked like a death-hold, for this time the grunting Frisky was unable to shake himself loose, and I believe the white-furred worm-that-turned would have killed his enemy if I hadn't succeeded in breaking the now berserk Oswald's hold. A blow with a stick accomplished the desired result.

Frisky never bothered Oswald again. And to the eternal credit of the latter be it said that he didn't follow up his advantage. When the unexpected happens and an arena under dog scores a victory, the said under dog usually turns bully, but Oswald confined himself to glaring at the enemy when they met face to face. I really believe Oswald would have killed Frisky if the former "bad man" of the arena had launched another assault. And I have a hunch that Frisky knew this. He kept as far away from Oswald as possible and when they met it was no fault of Frisky's.

Queenie, a Royal Bengal, and Ma'am, a Sumatra tiger, were another pair of animals that kept a feud going in my arena for some time. Queenie was larger than Ma'am, but the difference in size was not so great as usual in the case of two full-grown tigers of these species. In most cases the Royal Bengal is a considerably larger animal, but Ma'am was an unusually big Sumatran.

These Sumatrans are nasty cusses and love to pick fights. Ma'am was no exception.

I added Queenie to my tiger group when Ma'am was already a member of it. Ma'am lost no time in making it plain that she did not like Queenie. In this case, however, I know what started the feud. It was the fact that I gave Ma'am's pedestal to Queenie. Such shifting had never caused dissension in the arena before, and I did not realize that I was starting trouble. Dozens of times before I had changed a tiger from one seat to another without any bad consequences.

As Queenie's position in the tunnel was ahead of Ma'am's, the royal lady reached Ma'am's former seat first. During two successive performances the tough gal from Sumatra made straight for her old pedestal and yanked its occupant down. The scraps that followed might have proved serious if I hadn't been able to break them up quickly. Whatever advantage there was in these brief skirmishes was on Queenie's side; for the husky Bengal was not exactly good-natured about being pulled off her perch. She fought back vigorously and dealt out as much punishment as she took—and usually more.

Clearly, the only thing to do was to switch Ma'am back to her former seat. This I did, but she had now developed so definite a hate for Queenie that the move accomplished nothing.

The third time Ma'am attacked Queenie she got a good deal more than she bargained for and she left the Royal Bengal alone for several days. Then one day when I was exercising the tigers in the arena the feud suddenly broke out again. As usual, Ma'am was the aggressor. She made a sudden rush for Queenie, who was

watching her over a shoulder. When Queenie increased her stride, Ma'am foolishly thought it meant she had the Bengal on the run. With a spurt, the roughneck from Sumatra caught up with the animal she had singled out for persecution and made a leap for her.

Queenie was prepared. She whirled suddenly, and, with her back protected by the bars of the arena, fairly flew at her tormentor. A furious battle followed, in which Queenie soon got the upper hand, forcing Ma'am to retreat. Little real damage was inflicted by either beast, but the violence of Queenie's assault left Ma'am reeling and bewildered.

Ma'am was forever sticking her chin out. She had as much pugnacity as I have ever seen in a tiger, but not much real fighting ability to back it up. She was a game but not a wise fighter. She had a genius for "over-matching" herself and almost invariably she was defeated. She had a few draws to her credit, but, to my knowledge, not a victory. Yet she persisted in picking fights.

One day during a performance of my lion-tiger act a lion made a spring for Queenie and got her down. This was too good an opportunity for Ma'am to pass up. Here was a chance to cash in on another animal's efforts. Ma'am leaped from her pedestal and in a flash was beside the felled tigress. But she had hardly lashed out at Queenie when two big lions jumped from their pedestals and dashed over to join the fray.

In the free-for-all that followed, Queenie—a wise and calculating fighter—managed to wriggle free and get away from her assailants, and when the Royal Bengal was gone, Ma'am found herself with three lions to fight! Before I could break up the scrap they did a

pretty thorough job of cuffing and mauling her. She was lucky to get off with the superficial wounds that the lions inflicted.

Subsequently, Ma'am lost two more decisions to Queenie, who shortly afterward was removed from the act so that she might have cubs. The cubs were a success and I decided to keep Queenie out of the act and use her exclusively for breeding purposes.

Two years later, I had to put her back in the act. My tiger group had been depleted and the move was necessary. Pneumonia had taken one animal and another had been killed in a fight. For three or four months, prior to my decision to restore Queenie (I planned to put her back only temporarily), Ma'am had behaved pretty well. Four sound thrashings in a row, as a result of arena fights she had started, seemed to chasten her. She had not exactly turned docile, but she was much changed. Even the inexpert observer would have singled her out as a beast that had settled down to minding her own business.

For five successive performances, after I put Queenie back in the act, Ma'am behaved herself—so well, in fact, that I began to wonder whether she still remembered her enemy of two years before. And then one day the fun began—at a time when I had a right to feel quite reassured.

The act was over and the animals were leaving for the tunnel that led back to their cages. Queenie was off her pedestal and well on her way to the tunnel door when it suddenly occurred to Ma'am to attack her. Queenie, an exponent of preparedness, had never once taken her eyes off her old enemy from the time I put her back in the act, and she was looking over her shoul-

der in a manner that was characteristic of her, when Ma'am elected to get fresh again.

Queenie increased her stride as Ma'am made a dash for her that could be interpreted only as an assault. As the Bengal disappeared through the tunnel, Ma'am only a few yards behind her, I yelled to the attendant at the tunnel door to "partition off" Queenie. The tunnel is a sectional affair, with a series of doors by means of which the animals can be separated.

The attendant wasn't quick enough and I knew by the commotion in the tunnel that Ma'am had caught up with Queenie and that they were locked together. In a few seconds there was such bedlam inside the chute that the bandsmen, whose stand was located near by, became frightened and started to leave.

I rushed out of the arena and dashed around to where the struggle was going on inside the tunnel. Through the three-inch openings between the boards I could see that this time Queenie was determined to pay Ma'am back for all her dirty work. It took the combination of all the "blanks" in a freshly loaded pistol and the vigorous prods of three arena attendants to separate the combatants. Queenie came out of the battle with only a few unimportant scratches, whereas the ever beaten Ma'am emerged with a bad limp. Her left hind leg was chewed and torn.

That cured me. I had had enough of Ma'am. The next day I transferred her to the menagerie and her career as a performer was at an end.

As interesting a feud as my arena has ever known is one that is still in progress. I am referring to the ill feeling that has developed between Nero, boss of the

arena since 1926, and Sultan, the first serious disputant of Nero's long reign.

(The reader, knowing that mine is a lion-tiger act, might wonder why the "arena boss" is a lion, and whether this doesn't establish the superiority of the lion over the tiger. Before going on with my story, let me explain that my act is so organized that only a lion can appear in this rôle. Before I enter the arena, I send in twenty lions and five tigers. Only during this brief interval, when the animals are milling about the floor, is it possible for a beast to establish himself as the big chief; and because of the preponderance of lions it is natural that a member of this species should emerge as the ruling power. Once I enter the arena, *I'm* the boss. The rest of the tigers follow me in and never really get a chance to dispute Nero's leadership. I drive them to their pedestals as fast as they come through the chute into the arena.)

In 1931, when Sultan was a three-year-old—and a big powerful one, let me add—he started his feud with Nero. I had just sent the lions into the ring and Nero, standing beside a lioness in whom he had more than a passing interest, was paying the lady considerable attention. Sultan, with supreme nerve, bounded over and pushed Nero out of the way. It was as if a college freshman tried to steal the best girl of the president of the senior class.

Whirling around, Nero jumped on Sultan and would have beaten up the pretender if I had not stopped the fight; but Nero would have won only on account of superior experience. Sultan was just as powerful an animal—one of the finest specimens I have ever trained. In fact, what flashed through my mind was that he was

the most formidable beast to enter my act since the day, five years before, when I added Nero to the act and he promptly licked the stuffing out of Bredo, the big lion that was then arena boss, and started the reign of Nero I.

Sultan was not discouraged by the failure of his first attempt to take over Nero's best girl. His inexperience made him feel, during a performance a few days later, that he had accomplished something by getting beside the lioness first. This was easily done, as he had an earlier place in the chute than Nero and was able to beat the arena boss in by a few seconds.

When Nero entered the arena he again found Sultan beside his favorite lioness. The young upstart was licking her face with his tongue and rubbing his shoulder against hers.

Nero came thundering up and with a great slap of the paw sent Sultan spinning. Sultan was determined to show the young lady he wasn't afraid of the boss. Growling angrily, he poised himself for a leap. Nero was ready for the attack and dealt out punishment that made the "punk" (arena language for a fresh young lion or tiger who is beginning to feel his oats) back up.

But Sultan's spirit was unbroken and he was ready to launch another attack, when I entered the arena and with a burst of fire from my gun got his mind back on his work. Up his pedestal went the young pretender and the liveliness of his spring and the general confidence of his manner indicated plainly enough that his encounter with Nero, even though it had resulted in a retreat, had not affected his morale in the slightest.

During my engagement at Madison Square Garden in New York in 1931, there was a terrific struggle be-

tween Nero and Sultan, and this time I had a tough job stopping it. Again I felt that if the fight had continued, Nero would probably have won on account of superior defensive knowledge born of scores of battles; but I couldn't help recognizing the fact that Sultan was as powerful and courageous as Nero, and I knew that the boss would do well not to miss a trick in future encounters with this tough and spirited punk.

All during the 1932 season, Nero and Sultan fought, and it struck me more than once that while Nero managed to maintain his leadership, the constant struggle was beginning to wear him down a bit. I also noticed that he now never kept his eyes off Sultan, whereas in 1931 he had appeared quite disdainful, frequently turning his back on the would-be usurper and seeming to defy him to do his worst.

Sultan, I should point out, was getting bigger all the time. With the passing of every month, he was a more formidable opponent.

When they staged their last scrap, the day after we returned to winter quarters at the conclusion of the 1932 season, Sultan was almost as big as Nero. The pretender weighed about five hundred and fifty pounds and the big chief about six hundred.

All my animals were cramped after their train ride and I turned them loose in the arena for exercise. First, I sent in a group of male lions.

Sultan was a sight to behold that day. I've never seen an animal in a more exuberant mood. He romped around the arena, playfully taking a harmless poke at the animal nearest him. The combination of good health and youth made the big husky lion behave in a way that seemed almost kittenish.

In the course of his prankish tour of the arena, Sultan gave Nero a harmless poke from behind. I'm sure he didn't know it was Nero he was poking. Nero's back was the nearest pokeable object, and, being in a frivolous mood, Sultan dealt it a slap. The young lion's behavior showed plainly that he was not trying to pick a fight. Still a youngster, he was looking for some one to play with.

But this was not Nero's interpretation. The arena boss decided he was being challenged again. Enraged, he swung around and tore into the younger beast. Sultan backed away, not yet fully realizing he was in a fight.

Making no real defensive effort, Sultan allowed himself to be cornered in a bad spot between a pedestal and the arena bars. Before the sprightly punk fully realized what he was up against, the arena boss sank his teeth into the side of his neck and held on.

Then Sultan swung into action. He bit deeply into Nero's shoulder. The big chief retained his neck-hold and the animals were locked together.

Anxious to get the other lions out of the arena as fast as possible, I yelled to the boy at the tunnel to rattle the door and open it. This he did and in a few seconds the arena was deserted except for the two duelists. The non-combatants welcomed the chance to leave. Meanwhile, I was "blanking" the two fighters from outside the arena, but I might just as well have employed a "cap" pistol.

As I blanked away futilely, the animals crashed against the steel bars, a deadly hatred characterizing the conduct of both for the first time. Pedestals were upset and the arena fairly rocked with the struggle.

Sultan broke Nero's hold, at the same time releasing his hold on the arena boss. The younger animal seemed content to rest his case for a few seconds and try for a better hold.

The arena boss was not accustomed to having his jaw-grip broken. Usually when his teeth clamped together on anything, they stayed that way until Nero chose to relax his hold. Enraged, he prepared to attack again; but Sultan beat him to it. Picking his opening like a boxer, the pretender went sailing into the chief, reminding me again of Nero's own method of attack when he dethroned Bredo six years before.

Sultan backed Nero against the arena bars and drew first blood with a slash to the boss's nose. Nero, hate written all over him, sprang straight for the foe. The charge knocked Sultan over and in a flash Nero had the fallen lion's left front leg between his jaws. Sultan desperately lunged forward and just managed to sink his teeth into the side of Nero's jaw. Automatically the arena boss let go of the younger animal's leg.

Efforts to break up the fight with long prods having failed, I sent one of the attendants on the run for a large bucket of a powerful disinfectant that we use in the circus. The boy arrived as Sultan tightened his hold on the jaw of the writhing Nero. I rushed into the arena and dashed the foul-smelling liquid on the struggling pair. The boy at the tunnel had instructions to rattle the door as I threw the disinfectant over them. It was significant to me that when Sultan relaxed his jaws, Nero made an immediate dash for the open door. He had had enough.

I was now alone in the arena with Sultan, who had plenty of fight in him for a tired animal. He came at

me hard, but I spun him around with a blaze from my gun and a movement of my chair. The boy rattled the door again and Sultan retreated to the tunnel.

I do not interpret what happened as an indication that Nero would have lost the fight if it had continued. Greater cunning might have won it for him; but his willingness to call it off at the first opportunity made it plain that the older lion took his younger adversary seriously; and Nero had not taken seriously the pretensions of any other animal since he first swept into the arena and made himself dictator.

I afterward discussed the incident with John Ringling. "It wouldn't surprise me, Clyde," he declared as I finished my story, "to see Sultan establish himself as arena boss before the next season is over."

I was inclined to agree with him that this was a possibility. "That would be a real tragedy for Nero," Mr. Ringling remarked thoughtfully. "He's the greatest performing lion I've ever owned; but that's the way things go in the arena."

Indeed, monarchs come and go in the big cage just as they do in the outer world.

But if arena feuds have often meant the loss of prestige and leadership to some of my charges, so also have arena friendships helped to build the position of others. The strangest arena friendship in my experience involves Duke, a lion, and two tigresses, Venus and Ruth. These three animals—I speak in the present, for the friendship is still on—are positively devoted to one another. The situation is all the more extraordinary because of the fact I've stated before—that lions and tigers are natural enemies. As it is unusual for the two species

to be friends even for the briefest period of time, you can readily realize my astonishment over the real and now long-standing amity that prevails among these three.

Usually the top of the pyramid of animals I build early in my act, in which my lions and tigers are ranged around the arena on pedestals of different heights, is one of the storm-centers of the show I put on. This top consists of a trio of animals perched on very high seats. It has always been a problem to find three animals for these rôles that wouldn't wage too violent war on one another.

For a long time the three posts were held by tigers, with Rajah, a famous performer, in the center. Rajah, one of the biggest striped cats I have ever trained, regularly took not too playful pokes at his neighbor on the right and the one on the left. While mine is a fighting act and I encourage my animals to show plenty of spirit, I don't want them to claw one another up. Rajah gave me some bad moments, especially when he chose to show the public how easy it was to knock his lighter associates off their seats, and I was thinking seriously of assigning him another rôle in the act when he solved the problem himself by getting a bone lodged in his throat and choking to death.

I decided to try a lion in Rajah's place. I believed that there couldn't possibly be any more strife among the pyramid-topping trio. As successor to Rajah, I selected Duke. He was chosen for his looks rather than because of any gentle qualities. Like my other maned cats, he was a roughneck.

To my amazement a genuine friendship—in fact, the only real lion-tiger friendship I know about first-hand

—developed. On Duke's right sits Ruth and on his left sits Venus; and it is no exaggeration to say that he is genuinely fond of them, and that they are as fond of him.

Before any one arises to argue that perhaps this is all just an individual predilection of Duke's for female tigers, let me state that at one time or another the big lion has waged war on every other tigress in my act, almost killing one of them.

What, then, is the answer? Search me. All I can tell you is that these three animals get along beautifully. It is now a common sight, after I have pyramided my lions and tigers, to see Duke tenderly licking the faces of Venus and Ruth and to see these ladies responding to his caresses.

Just as I began to think that Duke had turned traitor and entered the tiger camp, he disillusioned me by cuffing the daylights out of a tigress that sits in the tier directly below him in the pyramid. There really was no reason for beating this lady up. Perhaps Duke did it to remind the gal on his left and the one on his right how unusually kind he was being to them.

Venus is known in my act as the "substitute roll-over tiger." One of my regular features is the performance of Rosie, a big tigress I've already mentioned, that I've trained to roll over and over on her side with all the humility of a dog performing this trick.

Rosie got into a bad fight that resulted in her losing the sight of one eye. In consequence, she gradually became somewhat undependable. With only one eye to watch her enemies, the lions, who looked on from above as she performed her roll-over trick on the floor of the arena, she was nervous and jumpy, and often too

wrought up to be used with complete safety in the performance of the stunt. Several times after her partial blindness set in, she "went bad" in the arena, largely over worry about what the lions on her blind side might do to her, and it took plenty of resourcefulness to keep her from getting me. Sometimes an animal will lunge hatefully at its trainer out of sheer desperation and not because it has any real grievance.

It didn't take me long to see that I ought to train an animal to take Rosie's place. I picked Venus for the assignment on account of her quick intelligence and ready responsiveness. She made rapid progress and soon was doing the roll-over trick fairly well. To accustom her to the act, I began alternating her with Rosie. When I worked Rosie in the roll-over stunt, I took Venus out of the act, putting Rosie in the seat beside Duke.

But immediately Duke again proved himself to be only partially pro-tigress. The first time I seated Rosie beside him he led with his left and sent her flying off her seat to the arena floor. When Rosie tried to get back on her pedestal, Duke let fly a second time, and Rosie went crashing to the floor again.

As powerful as Duke is, I would back Rosie in a fight with him if she had two good eyes, but she was no match for the lion in her handicapped state. I took Rosie out of the act and put Venus in again. The very next performance Duke was licking Venus's face as before—when he wasn't licking Ruth's.

Venus has virtually replaced Rosie as roll-over tiger. Occasionally I take Venus out, for the roll-over trick is a difficult one for a fresh performer to do regularly, and it is wise to give the new star a rest. When Venus is out, I have to watch Duke constantly; and

though I manage to suppress many a budding scrap, there are some that get under way before I can interfere.

The summer after I had installed Duke and his two tigress friends on my highest pedestals, I began to wonder if their lovey-dovey behavior—at the very pinnacle of a pyramid which was otherwise composed of snarling, angry beasts—might not detract somewhat from the savage effect which I desired. The life of an animal-trainer is just a series of experiments. Sometimes they work and sometimes they don't. I decided to try putting another lion in Duke's place, and selected Sascha, a mischievous youngster that would be certain to provide a belligerent and lively peak for the pyramid.

As things turned out, the peak became so lively that the act almost collapsed. Venus and Ruth changed from love-birds to she-devils: they hated Sascha as cordially as they had loved Duke. And Sascha returned their hatred one hundred per cent. Despite my efforts to keep him in order, he immediately tried to yank Venus and Ruth off their pedestals.

Ruth, up to now the shrinking violet of the arena, decided she didn't want anybody but Duke sitting next her, and after a preliminary snarl or two she gave Sascha a taste of her claws with an unexpectedness that almost sent him into a tail spin. As soon as Sascha regained his balance, Venus took a hand. She had previously let Sascha clout her, contenting herself with edging away from him. Now she let him clout her again, but after shrinking back momentarily, she hauled off and showed the big fellow what a tigress can do when aroused. In a moment both animals had fallen ten feet

to the floor and were rolling around in the sawdust below, each striking out determinedly for a vulnerable spot.

Duke, who had been given a humble position in the bottom row of pedestals, leaped to join the fray in defense of his lady friend. Sascha's brother, a gangster lion always ready for trouble, also hurled himself into the battle.

Once again I broke up a scrap before any real damage was done, but I perspired plenty before I did.

I put Duke back with Venus and Ruth and that trio is going to remain intact as long as I run my act and the three animals are alive. As far as they are concerned, I'm through with experimentation. They like one another and I like them for it.

Mine is a fighting act, as I have said—an "untamable" act, as it is known in the circus world—but it is good to be able to depend upon a few animals to keep the peace, especially those that sit high up. And the Duke-Venus-Ruth sector is the one that I can count upon.

Of course, I repeat, one can never fully trust the big cats, but I at least know that these three are congenial. They may not like me, but they are so interested in one another that they hardly give me a thought except when I call upon them to perform, and then they quickly go through their routine so that they may get together for another tête-à-tête without much loss of time.

## VIII

### *No Two Alike*

**T**HREE is as much variety of character and disposition among the big cats as there is among human beings. Just as I have never met two people whose traits were identical, so have I never found two cat animals that were really alike. I can recall instances of animals whose traits resembled those of other animals; in fact, I remember more than once being ready to say that this or that lion or tiger was another so-and-so; and just as I began to think I'd at last found a perfect duplication of a certain one, in character and general comportment, something would happen to change my mind—some unforeseen occurrence that established a definite point of variance.

The most quarrelsome beast I have ever handled was Bouncie, a lioness. I am speaking of Bouncie II, as I have had more than one of this name.

I can think of other beasts that were *almost* as quarrelsome—there are hundreds of arena fights to jog my memory—but no animal that I have trained was quite the trouble-maker that Bouncie II was. She had the amazing record of starting about fifty per cent of the fights that took place in the arena while she was part of my act.

It isn't enough to say that Bouncie was quarrelsome.

She was a blustering vixen with a perpetual chip on her shoulder. Seemingly resentful of virtually anything any other animal did, she was the personification of snappishness and cantankerousness, a contentious spitfire whose idea of inefficiency was to overlook an opportunity to start a scrap.

I don't know why I kept Bouncie in my act, but an animal like this bellicose lady is a challenge to the animal-trainer who gets a kick out of his work only when he subdues a really pugnacious beast. After much effort, I got Bouncie to the point where she was taking orders. In fact, she became a fairly expert performer. Good looks, plus the general tempestuousness of her movements, made her exciting to watch.

I am always loath to take such a performer out of an act. In the case of Bouncie this feeling was human enough, for I had conquered the fire-eater, and though she occasionally tried to attack me, I was always able to convince her that she was wasting her time. I would get her mind back on her work and make her do her stuff. Bouncie would always give me a nasty look before performing and then perform beautifully.

But she was still the fractious beast that nature made her, and, having submitted to my will, she often took her resentment out on some unsuspecting animal that had no reason to expect an attack.

One evening, after she had done her stuff, Bouncie astonished me by jumping down from her high seat near the tunnel door and landing on my big tiger Theba, who was leaving the arena. It was an amazing thing for her to do, for Theba was almost two hundred pounds heavier than she, and capable of wrecking my most pugnacious animal. Theba didn't waste much time. He

shook off the determined but much lighter Bouncie and grabbed her by the neck. Why he didn't snap it I'll never know; he could easily have done so.

I was preparing to fight off Theba when the huge tiger almost disdainfully let go and trotted through the tunnel to his cage. Bouncie's neck was a masterpiece of swollen lopsidedness for over three weeks. She developed a fever and for a few days I would not have bet on her recovery; but she pulled through, probably because of a keen interest in life based on several other fights she eagerly looked forward to—fights that must have kept her alive as she thought how much fun it would be to start them.

Bouncie is now ten years old and nearing the end of her career. I've had her in and out of my act more times than any other cat animal I've handled. The reason why, in introducing her to the reader, I've spoken of her in the past tense is that she is no longer the firebrand she used to be. Still a tough gal, however, she will start a scrap if she feels she has a good chance of emerging from it alive. In the old days, she opened fire and flung herself into the fray with a recklessness that bespoke an utter unconcern about what might happen to her. Often I wondered whether she wasn't depending upon me to save her. In a fight with Theba that closely followed the one I have mentioned—yes, she was foolhardy enough to start another scrap with the animal that had almost killed her—she would surely have been blotted out if I had not done some fast emergency work. I saved the incurable idiot by dousing Theba with cold water and doing some determined blanking for good measure. This happened less than a month after Bouncie's neck had healed.

I am often asked to tell about my brightest animal or my stupidest. I also am asked for an example of the extreme development of gallantry, clannishness, sneakiness, dependability, sensitiveness, or some other characteristic, that sets a certain lion or tiger apart from his brethren of the arena.

I shall try to discuss these and other distinguishing characteristics in this chapter. It is not an easy subject to handle. For instance, the mere mention of "dependability" in connection with the great cats is in itself a contradiction. I have never handled a lion or a tiger that I felt to be wholly dependable. The cat animals aren't built that way. It must be borne in mind that in speaking of the "reliability" of these treacherous beasts I mean merely a *comparative degree* of reliability.

Rex, a Royal Bengal tiger, was the most dependable cat I have ever trained. He went to greater lengths to avoid a fight than any other lion or tiger I have known. When the issue was forced upon him and there was no escape from a battle, he fought like a demon and usually won. His first move when another beast attacked him was to jump to a high pedestal and remain perched there. Three or four times lions ganged up on such occasions and dragged him down from his roost—and always lived to regret it. For Rex was at his best when the odds were against him.

Of all the great cats I have handled for any length of time, Rex is the only one I have never known to start a fight. But, like many another true lover of peace, when attacked he fought with an outraged fury that his assailants could not match.

I once worked myself into a cold sweat keeping Rex from killing Theba—now the biggest tiger in my act.

Rex, in a playful mood, tried to play with Theba, whose response was to lash out and start a fight. A terrific tussle followed. The animals were locked together, each determinedly trying to rip the other's throat. Only by dashing ammonia on them could I stop them. When I finally got them separated they were so exhausted they could hardly move. Theba rolled over in a heap and was groggy for a full minute. Rex moved around uncertainly and obviously too had had enough; but he had more resistance than his attacker.

As previously pointed out, the cages in which my animals are exhibited before the show starts are divided off by bars through which the inmates can take passes at each other. This menagerie, in other words, is not a series of separate cages but one long cage partitioned off into separate cages by bars that form the side walls. I once saw Rex purring contentedly in one of these cages while a lion in the next cage lunged desperately to get at him. Rex could have got back at the maned foe, who lingered at the bars longer than was good for him, by doing some fast work with his claws. But he was a peace-loving beast. There was no necessity for a scrap and he wouldn't go in for one.

Rex died in the spring of 1932 at the age of eleven, the victim of an ailment I never could diagnose. Cynical animal experts of my acquaintance tell me that if he had lived long enough he would have ruined his record for dependability and made real trouble for me sooner or later. As a five-year-old, Rex once quite unexpectedly came tearing at me with what looked like homicidal intent. I fought him off and from then until his death he gave me no trouble.

The sneakiest cat I have ever handled is my big lion Prince. While I have my eye on him he is the soul of good behavior. He sits quietly on his pedestal, a positively benign look on his face. But the second I turn my back on him to devote myself to an animal in another part of the arena, this maned angel hauls off and swats the performer next him. If I turn around suddenly Prince, who seldom takes his eye off me for long, composes himself at once and does his best to look innocent, like a child in school who has done something behind the teacher's back and is trying to cover up.

Prince has many tricks in his repertoire. One of his specialties is making a quick rush for the tunnel door at the conclusion of the act, and, after getting deep into the tunnel, lying in waiting for the next animal, which finds itself pounced upon for no reason at all. Another trick of his is to let another animal pass him in the tunnel and then warily follow until that other is about to enter its cage. At this point Prince, striving to keep his reputation as my sneakiest animal, makes a leap for the hind quarters of his victim and starts dragging him back into the tunnel.

Prince's brother Cæsar is almost as bad an actor—but I have told about him elsewhere.

The sneakiest female among my cats is Empress II, a tigress. Well behaved when I am facing her, she is an entirely different animal when I turn my back on her. Once in winter quarters she jumped at me from behind and knocked me down. I "blanked" her from the floor before she could do any damage, cautiously getting to my feet as she debated the wisdom of attacking again. She decided to let me off without another assault.

Another time I was saved by the frantic yells of a vigilant assistant. Empress was coming at me from behind and I ducked under a pedestal as the boy outside the cage shrieked his warning. The tigress would have had an easier job this time, for I had a bad blister on one foot as a result of countless hours in the training ring with new animals; and my footwork would not have been nimble enough if I had given her a chance to get "on top" of me—to poise herself, in other words, for an effective spring. Once I faced her, Empress was less confident, for her specialty was attacking from behind.

I must admit that in escaping from under that pedestal to the safety-cage, I was playing poker with my assailant. My blistered foot slowed me up considerably and had Empress launched a real attack, I should have been in serious trouble. But I out-nerved her, blazing away with my blank-cartridge pistol with all the assurance in the world and brandishing my chair with the air of a man who was in doubt whether to bring it down on the head of his striped antagonist and brain her or let her live. I reached the safety-cage with Empress following me only half determinedly, when, if she had only been in possession of the facts, this was her chance to down me, if that was her ambition in life.

The experience gave me a sort of contempt for Empress and her sneaking sorties. Even though they have endangered my life time and again, I have never been able to convince myself fully that animals like her aren't cowards that, in the final analysis, I can always control. Which attitude I must confess is a bit dangerous. For, after all, cowards have done more than their

share of killing. Sometimes they do it to prove to themselves that they aren't cowards.

Because I considered Empress a craven, "in face a tiger but in heart a deer," I was silly enough to give her further opportunities to attack me from behind. My foolhardiness was part and parcel of being an insufficiently experienced and hard-boiled trainer. I knew my business and could have given older trainers cards and spades in teaching animals tricks; but they could have given me cards and spades, in this early period of my career, in the philosophy of the steel arena, a cardinal principle of which is to take no unnecessary risks. The normal risks are bad enough. There was no reason, after all the experience I had had with her, why I should ever again place Empress II on a pedestal in the arena where at any time during the performance she would have a chance to be behind my back. But extreme youth and a confidence which at this writing seems closely related to recklessness, made me enjoy turning my back on the cowardly lady.

Empress, it developed, had not given up her idea of getting me from behind. At a regular performance, I had just pyramided my lions and tigers, and, having done so, was taking my bow. It is customary for me to acknowledge the plaudits of the crowd at this point—one reason being that crowds all over the United States have decided the matter for me. For without exception, regardless of where I am playing, the second I get all of my forty lions and tigers up on pedestals of different heights, to form the pyramid, the audience breaks into applause. It's a difficult feat, I immodestly admit, but I perform more difficult ones that do not rouse half so much enthusiasm. Perhaps the explanation lies in the

reaction of an ancient relative of mine, a lovable old lady, who says, "Them lines and taggers [authenticity of pronunciation guaranteed] sure looks purty sitting all around that big cage."

After the above had been written, I was asked by an understandingly curious editor whether the reference was to my mother. The answer is "no." My mother saw my act once and fainted; and no one has been able to induce her to see it again. She frankly does not like it. Thinks it shocks people too much—and would be better if it was "cuter and less exciting."

I tell this to show how much wisdom my mother possesses. I agree with her. But the public disagrees with us. People will not pay to see an animal act that is not fiercely alive with fight. Not many, I believe, come to see the trainer killed, but not a few would enjoy seeing him mauled. Not badly mauled, mind you, but mauled just the same. Most people live for thrills. It is no criticism of them. They happen to be built that way. Life is full of boredom, and a good rousing fight between man and beast is not to be sneezed at as a temporary relief from tedium.

But let's go back to Empress II. I'm keenly aware that I've gotten away from her, but I thought you might be interested in these meanderings. Also it isn't a bad idea to get one's audience all worked up (my collaborator keeps telling me I'll be accused of going in for literary showmanship) and then go off at a tangent for a minute or so. It is on this principle that most circus thrills are built. . . .

I was taking my bow, as I said, at the conclusion of the pyramid. There was a good healthy round of applause and I was happy. But as I mechanically stared

ahead I noticed a look of horror on the face of a boy in a seat close to the arena. He jumped to his feet and was obviously trying to communicate something to me with frantic gestures. Instinctively I dropped to the floor of the arena—and Empress went sailing over my head!

My helpers outside the arena told me afterward that they had shouted to me when they saw the tigress crouching for her leap, but I failed to hear them. All that had registered with me was the agonized look on that boy's face, and his gestures—and he probably saved my life.

Empress was easy to handle after her latest assault from behind had failed. I drove her toward the tunnel door almost without effort and sent her, unprotesting, back to her cage; for once again, now that she was facing me, the sneak was not so effective as she was in attacking from the rear.

The bloodthirstiest cats I've ever handled? Topsy and Mary, lionesses. This pair worked with their mother, who was known as Moms.

In describing this trio, I am harking back over ten years, to my early days as assistant trainer with the Gollmar Brothers' Circus.

The Topsy-Mary-Moms trio worked with three other lions, and the act was considered a big one in those days. I got a great kick out of Topsy and Mary, two of the most playful animals I have ever observed. They romped and rolled around like kittens and seemed so tame I wondered how my boss, the chief trainer, was going to get any thrilling effects with them. As big as their mother, they seemed to enjoy taking gentle pokes

at her. I admired them for pulling their punches as they did, always tapping her rather than striking her. Topsy and Mary, it occurred to me more than once, could have dealt their mother considerable punishment if they had been as cruel as other lion daughters of my experience.

And then one day I had a shocking awakening. Summoned by one of the cage boys, I found Topsy and Mary gnawing away at the dead body of their mother, whom they had evidently slain sometime during the night or early morning. And we had thought we were being kind in housing these animals, that seemed so fond of one another, in one big cage!

Topsy and Mary had consumed most of their mother's body, the bloodthirstiest thing I've ever known animals to do. I had heard stories about lions that had devoured others of their kind, but this was my first and only experience with the unpleasant phenomenon.

Having eaten their mother and found her a tasty dish, the two killers, once real chums, attacked each other—each perhaps trying to find out whether the other tasted as good as Moms.

One day in training quarters, I let them out of their cage and started them toward the tunnel that led to the arena. As they left the cage they started fighting and in the very first scrimmage banged against the open cage door that separated me from them, and slammed it shut! This door, when open, formed a barrier that protected me; with it shut, I was face to face, at the mouth of the tunnel, with the killers.

There was only one thing to do and I did it before the animals, losing valuable seconds in their bewilderment over my presence in those cramped quarters, de-

cided to attack. I quickly swung the door open and sprang into the cage, slamming the door shut before the beasts quite realized what I was doing. They leaped at the bars in an effort to get me, but they were now wasting their time. After several vain attempts, the vicious pair swung around and disappeared into the tunnel, jostling each other as they entered. Once they were inside the arena, I was able to leave the cage and go to work. I didn't mind facing the gruesome pair in a thirty-two-foot arena where nimble footwork prevented them from cornering me. It was entirely different from facing them in close quarters where they had me trapped.

I eventually took Topsy and Mary out of my act; for after a while I couldn't look at them without conjuring up a nauseating picture of them tearing chunks out of the dead body of Moms. I had them placed in separate cages and they were assigned to the side-show menagerie.

The most willing cat I ever trained was a tiger we called Bessie. I don't recall having ever found it necessary to prod her through the chute that leads to the arena. Not a few animals have to be poked with long poles before they will move along the chute and into the performing ring.

Moreover, Bessie always got up on her pedestal without giving me an argument. She would leap up with cheerful abandon, obviously enjoying every move she made. She was one of the few animals I've handled that I never had to cue. She waited eagerly for her turn to perform and often had to be discouraged from trying

to do a trick a second time. Once, in her eagerness to get into action, she leaped from her pedestal a few seconds before I was ready for her, and nearly ruined the performance of another animal that had the center of the floor. Realizing she had made a mistake, she hopped back on her pedestal so precipitately that she almost overturned it. All her movements were like that—spirited, zestful, almost pathetically eager.

Once while I was making a leopard walk the tight-rope, I discovered that at the far end of the arena Bessie was rolling a globe! This was her chief trick. Unable to wait until I reached her, she was practising behind my back. She came close to being that almost non-existent creature, "a born performer."

Bessie, now past her prime as a soloist, confines her performing to posing in the pyramid. She is as willing as ever, and to this day it is unnecessary to cue her.

Sleika, one of my best tigresses, is the most sensitive creature I have ever trained. More than any other animal that got its schooling in my training ring, she wants appreciation.

I make a practice of inspecting my animals after each performance, and invariably when I reach Sleika's cage she leaps to the bars so that I may rub her head and give her a pat. One day, in an effort to break up a fight that threatened to assume serious proportions, I was obliged to swing a long stick in an effort to drive off one of the combatants. In wielding the stick, I accidentally tapped Sleika, who was caught in the center of the milling pack. It was hardly a real blow; certainly it could have caused no pain. Yet Sleika was offended. After the performance, when I made my rounds, she

sulked. Hanging back in the rear of her cage, she refused to come forward for a pat. Not until the next day did she forgive me. As of old she came to the bars and let me stroke her head and we were friends again.

The brightest animal I've ever handled is Venus, the tigress I found—after a search lasting three years—to fill in for Rosie, the striped cat through which I introduced to the American circus-going public the now familiar roll-over stunt. To make a tiger understand, without punishment (for even touching the animal is out of the question), that you want it to roll over is no simple matter, as I have pointed out in a previous chapter.

When I taught Rosie—after months and months of back-breaking work—to perform this trick and it was exhibited, it was pronounced a freak. A great triumph, chorused several people in my field, but one that could never be repeated with another cat. There was only one Rosie—an exceptional tigress that could be taught *anything*—and when she ceased to function there would be no more roll-over stunt. That was their view.

Secretly I was inclined to agree with them. In teaching a dog to roll over you can grab it and actually turn it over on its side, make clear what you're driving at. Of course this can't be done with a tiger. You have to rely, in working with so dangerous a beast, on subtler cues.

Over a year before Rosie sustained her eye injury, I decided to find an understudy for her. I experimented with several tigers and tigresses, but they were all incapable of the concentration necessary. They didn't even begin to understand what I wanted them to do.

Adequate performers of simpler tricks, they were unable to get the roll-over idea through their heads; and one by one I dismissed them.

It was after this long period of discouragement that I tried out Venus, an animal that had always been quick to learn but whose real genius as a performer I did not fully appreciate. I would have tried Venus sooner, but she was considerably smaller than Rosie and up to now I had confined my search for a substitute to animals that were as large or almost as large as Rosie.

From the very beginning, Venus clicked. I do not mean that she instantly started doing the difficult roll-over trick; but she did follow me with rare understanding in my explanation by means of arm and body cues, through its various stages. I nursed her along step by step and then one day decided to put the whole trick together. Venus, a cat with a real memory, followed me beautifully and although she did not perform the roll-over with the precision and assurance of Rosie, she did an acceptable job, now and then halting for a second or two as she momentarily forgot a cue but always recovering and remembering the next move. After a few weeks, she was performing the feat with all the smoothness of an old stager; and she is doing it in my act to this very day.

The stupidest cat to pass through my hands was Jennie, a tigress.

Poor Jennie! She just couldn't grasp an idea quickly. A gorgeous-looking animal, she had real picture value and I strove to keep her in the act, but eventually I realized I was wasting my time.

For a while, all I could teach Jennie to do was to

get up on a pedestal. But I could not teach her to get off! Once on a pedestal, she made it her home, declining to come down again. There was no defiance about her unwillingness to descend. It was plain to be seen that she was puzzled, and, not knowing what to do, decided to stay put.

After many weeks of effort, I managed to make Jennie understand that I did not want her to pose permanently on her pedestal. Completely "seat-broken," she was now getting up on her perch and down again. She was not working smoothly, but she was at least responding.

At last I determined to take a chance and use her in a regular performance. Jennie—put in merely for atmosphere while other animals did solo stunts on the arena floor—got up on her pedestal at the beginning of the act and sat there like a nice girl, but when the act was over and the other animals had left the arena she remained on her seat, as in a trance, staring blankly ahead of her!

The act ended, I had left the arena, but I had to re-enter and work on Jennie, who failed to respond to efforts made, by poking at her through the bars, to get her down from her pedestal. I had to drive her off the seat myself, and a full minute elapsed before she realized what I wanted her to do. When my meaning finally penetrated, she shook herself, like some one coming out of a reverie, and jumped to the arena floor.

I realized I must do some more work on Jennie before I used her in the act again. I put her through a series of rehearsals, and the beautiful moron of the tiger world finally began to show a fair amount of responsiveness. After drilling her for over two weeks, I

put her back in the act on trial and made up my mind to use her in one of my next performances. It was a shame to keep this striped beauty out of the arena.

Jennie didn't lose much time convincing me that I had made a mistake. Another tiger took her seat, leaving the one next it unoccupied. Frequently an animal leaps up the wrong pedestal, but a situation of this kind rarely makes trouble for me. The displaced animal, ninety-nine times out of a hundred, mounts the nearest unoccupied pedestal. I tried to drive Jennie up on the seat next to hers; but she would have none of it. She just stuck around at the foot of her occupied seat, looking up every few seconds in complete bewilderment at its occupant.

It's hard to go on with an animal act when one of your charges is not functioning. I decided to drive the occupant off Jennie's seat—an alert, intelligent animal—to the unoccupied pedestal that the stupid Jenny refused to mount.

Before I could put my plan into effect, the prize boob of my act got a plan of her own under way. Without warning she made a leap upward toward the top of her rightful pedestal! It was not the leap of an attacking animal. Plainly, she was jumping up with the idea of sharing the pedestal with its occupant. As Jennie soared upward, the said occupant, understandably interpreting the leap as an attack, hauled off and clawed away at Jennie's face as she reached the level of the seat. That was the beginning of a bitter fight which it wasn't easy to break up.

I decided that day to do no more experimenting with Jennie. I took her out of the act and kept her out.

Nervousness is generally characteristic of the great cats, especially the females. The most nervous animal I've ever handled was Nellie, a lioness. When I first started training her she developed a habit of whirling round and round excitedly before I could pedestal her. At the height of her dizzy revolutions, she looked like a new kind of whirling dervish. When I found I couldn't break her of this habit, I determined to capitalize it. With a band playing fast music while she swung around the arena, she became the "whirling lioness." The stunt was extremely popular and I did not drop it until my act became so big and there were so many lions and tigers in it that there was insufficient floor space left for nervous Nellie's performance. Thus ended the career of the "whirling lioness."

Another extremely nervous animal was Alice, a lioness who made a practice of racing round and round the arena. She would do a marathon and exhaust herself before I could get her up on a pedestal. This happened over and over again in training and I began to despair of making a performer of her.

But, as you know by now, I don't like to admit defeat before I've put up a struggle. Having already expended considerable time and effort on Alice, I felt justified in taking another fling, to see if something couldn't be done with her. I soon began to wonder if I didn't possess the misguided optimism my friends sometimes accuse me of. For, when I succeeded in interrupting Alice's marathon, what I managed to accomplish was not what I would write down as progress.

On one of these unhappy occasions, Alice suddenly halted and made a meaningless leap over the head of

an animal occupying a floor seat. It was one of those "almost" jumps, a good leap but not good enough. Alice's hind quarters struck the occupant of the seat just hard enough to send the beast on the pedestal toppling to the floor of the arena.

I continued my efforts to make a performer of Alice, but I finally had to abandon them. When she wasn't running marathons around the arena, she was doing a lot of meaningless high-jumping. Regretfully, I came to the conclusion that she would not do. And I do not carelessly use the word "regretfully." I really believe that among the nervous animals I have handled there were, potentially, some of the world's greatest cat performers. But circus schedules have a fixed finality about them, and an animal-trainer hasn't the time to conduct all the experiments he'd like to. I have a theory that nervousness and sensitiveness are definitely allied traits in animals; and I have another theory that a certain kind of sensitiveness in the four-legged world is a clear indication of arena genius. Some day I am going to prove it. This will be when I can spend weeks and weeks probing the idiosyncrasies of certain specimens without worrying about how the costs are piling up. In other words, this will happen when I make a lot of money and can do as I please.

Our old friends, Sascha and Beauty, two big lions, are the most clannish graduates of my school for jungle cats. About five years ago, when the Sells Floto Circus abandoned its animal acts, I took over its lions and tigers, including this pair. I received many warnings concerning them, especially about Beauty, who had al-

most killed John Helliot, well-known Sells Floto trainer.

The warnings regarding Beauty were anything but unwarranted. I found him a constant menace. Positively rebellious about doing anything but fight, with or without justification, all the other cats in sight, he became an arena nuisance. His brother Sascha was almost as bad a trouble-maker. And the real problem was that each, without any loss of time, rushed to the other's defense.

Neither of these lions had anything to do with any of the other animals in my act—except to war on them. And when the clawing and biting started, they fought side by side like demons. Any beast in the act that developed a feud with one of them had to fight both of them.

This clannish pair even went so far one day as to gang up against Nero. They were making things pretty hot for that arena boss when I broke up the scrap. It wasn't an easy scrap to stop, either. Only the fact that I intervened early made it possible for me to separate the combatants. Had the fight been under way a few minutes longer, before I stepped up with my chair and blank-cartridge gun to establish peace, my efforts would have been unavailing. It would have been necessary at least to resort to a bottle of ammonia.

Magnificent-looking animals and thrilling performers, Sascha and Beauty lend color to my act, but they keep me on my toes every second of the time they are in the arena with me. It is never possible for me to lose sight of one of the duo while I am putting the other through his paces.

I made this important discovery one day by turning

my back on Sascha while I worked with Beauty. Beauty was not concentrating, so I cracked my whip hard to get his attention. Sascha evidently thought I was displaying too much vehemence. At any rate, he decided to attack. Charging from behind, he would have knocked me over if it had not been for another one of those timely warnings from a cage boy outside. As I side-stepped, Sascha catapulted past me with enough force to knock over a dozen animal-trainers. Still determined, he swung around and came for me, Beauty joining him in the assault. I kept them off me, but they forced me back, back, back. Soon I was almost flush against the bars of the arena and once again the prods of alert attendants enabled me to escape without a clawing.

Beauty succeeded in reaching my right thigh, but accomplished nothing more serious than the ripping of my trousers. He left a minor trade-mark in the form of a few scratches that are hardly worthy of mention. They would have been more than scratches, however, if my boys had not been on the alert, and if the two lions had not permitted themselves to be bluffed by the prods. These long poles are absolutely worthless when a team like Sascha and Beauty attack in earnest. But animals can be fooled and my clannish pair took the poles seriously this time and let me reach the safety-cage.

On the whole, Nero, the arena boss, is the most sporting animal I've known; also the most philosophic. Time and again, over a period of years, some young lion, some gawky and ill-advised punk, tries to pick a quarrel with him. With very few exceptions, these youngsters would not have lasted five minutes in a fight with Nero.

Yet in almost every case the arena boss has confined his resistance to trotting away and ignoring his foolish attacker. When the foolhardy punk gets too fresh, Nero finds it necessary to send him reeling with a clout of the paw, but his usual practice is to turn his back contemptuously on these small fry. He doesn't believe in fighting unless the challenge is a real one. The childish attacks of arena freshmen are seldom dignified by any attention from this old stalwart. When he does shake off an ambitious punk, he sends him spinning without even looking at him; it is a mechanical operation, effortlessly performed. And when the offender goes over on his back or bangs against a pedestal or the arena bars, Nero doesn't trouble to follow up his advantage. He just can't be bothered. These punks have to be kept in their places, but they mustn't receive too much attention—even the rough kind—or they'll develop swelled heads. A thirty-two-foot arena is none too big for forty lions and tigers, and if some of 'em get swollen craniums there'll be less room than ever.

## IX

### *Fan Mail*

II FREELY and frankly confess that I get a great kick out of hearing from the people who see my act. It has become fashionable in recent years to adopt a blasé attitude toward fan mail. Perhaps I am simply naïve, but it is a fact that I never cease to wonder what tomorrow's mail will bring forth in the way of comment from those who have seen me perform in their town.

Nothing could be more varied than the letters I receive. Praise and criticism; advice, good and bad; requests of all kinds—these predominate. The letters are seldom dull.

One of the most human letters I ever received came from a woman who wrote, in part:

I read in the papers the other day that your mother has only seen you act once. The article said she fainted when she saw you in there with all those wild animals and she cannot bear to see you perform again. I am a mother and I know what it means to a mother to worry about her son. My son used to play baseball for a living. He was hit on the head one day and it almost killed me. At first, he wouldn't give it up and take some other job like I asked him to do. He never knew how I worried every day he played. A chap in our town was killed once playing baseball, so was it strange I worried? My boy finally gave it up and is now a policeman and I thank God I don't have to keep worrying whether he is going to get hit on the head with a baseball.

If you want to listen to a mother who knows, I think you should give up going in with wild animals in a cage and stop worrying your mother, although I like the way you do it and would appreciate a picture of you with the animals.

I sent this lady a photograph, along with a letter of thanks. She was undoubtedly trying to do me a kindness and I felt her letter called for a reply. I resisted the temptation to point out that policemen have been hit on the head in their time, though usually not by baseballs. Perhaps her son has a nice soft job like that of traffic officer, with scant likelihood of being hit by anything except an occasional automobile.

Some of my letters come from people offering inventions designed to help me in the arena. A few years ago, a gentleman tried to sell me the rights to an electrical whip which, he assured me, would simplify my work considerably. He wrote:

I was reading recently about an accident you had. No wonder you have accidents. How do you expect to make animals behave by *beating* them with a light whip like you use? To a lion or a tiger, a *blow* from a whip like that is a big joke. It don't make any difference how much force you use, *they can hardly feel it*. What you need is a whip that *hurts*, then they'll think it over before they try to start something."

The italics are mine.

My correspondent went on to tell me all about his novel invention (patent applied for). By way of warning me, I suppose, not to try to steal his invention he affixed to his crude sketch of the contraption the letter he had filed in Washington with the Patent Office. Judging by all the wires and gadgets I should have had

to carry on my person, in order to use this inventor's device, I imagine it would have taken me an hour or so to dress for the arena; and it would have been necessary to station an electrician outside the big cage in case anything went wrong.

There was no sense in starting an argument with this chap by pointing out that his theory of animal-training was all wrong. His idea, like that of so many other people, is that a trainer makes his animals perform by inflicting pain on them. I have already explained how untrue that is. If it were so, I would carry a spiked club into the arena with me instead of a whip. Although I have made many efforts to correct the fallacy, a good many people still believe that I strike my animals with the whip instead of employing it merely to make a cracking sound that gets the performers' attention and makes them concentrate on what I want them to do.

Some of my letters offer suggestions that I adopt. Several years ago I received an unusual letter from a man who pointed out that I could increase the effectiveness of my act if I stressed its danger more. He suggested that I post armed guards, in military uniforms, all around the arena. "Let them come in," wrote my correspondent, who had all the instincts of a showman, "to the tune of a lively march. Then, when they've taken up their positions, let the band suddenly stop playing. The crowd will be made expectant by the sudden halting of the music and then you're all set for a dramatic entrance."

It sounded good to me and I tried it out. In fact, I tried it out with a vengeance. About two weeks later my act started off like Scene I of a military spectacle. Twelve husky "soldiers" in eye-filling dress uniforms

of our own invention, wearing brightly polished metal helmets on their heads, carrying packs on their backs, and shouldering rifles whose burnished bayonets glistered under the bright lights of the big top, furnished the prelude to my act. Impressive-looking, but completely out of step, they stiffly arrayed themselves around the big cage and waited for THE GREAT BEATTY—the wor-r-r-rld's gretes' animal trainah!—to come on.

When the “Great Beatty” arrived, a silk-hatted announcer Took Great Pleasure in Telling All You Folks that the said Beatty, younges’ and mos’ feahless animal trainah on any continent, bah none, was Ready to do His Stuff. Then the announcer would remove his shiny topper, clear his throat in the manner of the immortal Joe Humphreys, and add, while you could hear a feather drop, “The rifle bearahs [*cue for the rifle bearahs to take a bow*] are for your protection. The trainah will protect himself!”

It was a great idea—or, at least, so it seemed. But somehow it troubled me. While I knew that our show gave the public the maximum of intelligent protection, I couldn’t help remembering that the rifles of the “soldiers” were loaded with blanks and that the public thought they were loaded with bullets. It was fairer to the public, as I’ll explain later, to protect them with blanks than with real bullets, but the fact remained that our audiences regarded our “rifle-bearahs” as guards prepared to shoot to kill, which of course they were not. Perhaps, despite my midwestern rearing, I have a New England conscience. I don’t know. Or perhaps it wasn’t conscience so much as the fact that I’d feel pretty foolish if it were discovered that our “twelve

crack shots" were dressed-up members of an acrobatic troupe, not one of whom could hit a barn door at ten paces.

It was all a beautiful contradiction, for nothing could be more unfair to an audience than to fight escaped animals with armed guards. In their efforts to hit the imaginary fugitives we are discussing (although I've had to combat some distressingly real ones), my "soldiers" would probably shoot more spectators than escaped beasts. It would be criminal to permit guards armed with real guns to come to the rescue in an emergency. This applies not only in the case of an escape, but to any serious situation that arises in the big cage. If, for instance, when an animal attacked me, armed guards started popping away, there would be considerable likelihood of their hitting me. Then, again, if an animal merely sustained a superficial injury, the trainer would be in a worse fix than ever. The rebel would be twice as dangerous as before.

Bullets, as I have frequently pointed out, are the nightmare of the circus. At our performances, the spectators are ranged all around the "rings" that form the stage and a stray bullet would almost certainly hit some one in the audience. In fact, when we are playing to a good-sized house (we packed 'em in regularly, by the way, in 1932) a man standing at any point outside my arena and shooting at a target inside would have to hit that target to avoid sending a bullet into the crowd. This is why circus-managers shake their heads decisively when the subject of protecting their animal-trainers with real guns is brought up.

After we had used our "twelve peerless marksmen" (another of their designations) for about a month, I

received another letter that started me thinking along entirely different lines about the impression our converted acrobats would make on an audience. This letter said, in part:

Oh, boy! You sure are getting away with murder! It hands me a laugh the way they bill you. "Fearless trainer" my eye! Hell! I'd go in there myself with your darned animals if I had a whole regiment standing outside ready to shoot any animal that went for me. Why don't you get a whole army? Give 'em machine guns and one or two Big Berthas and you wouldn't be taking any chances at all. You could go to sleep in the cage if you wanted to and if an animal tried to hurt you while you were sleeping, a machine gunner could get busy and start popping away. So you're the guy that's got so much nerve! My grandmother would go in with those animals and take her knitting along if all the time she was protected by the whole A. E. F. like you. "World's bravest animal trainer!"—Nuts! You give me a good swift pain—you and the guys who get out those billboards showing how you make the animals roll over and play dead.

A rather violent letter, but one that gave me something to think about. Through friends I began to inquire into the reactions of typical circus-goers and made the interesting discovery that not a few spectators believed me to be in no real danger, because of the "twelve peerless marksmen" ranged around the big cage! So I abandoned these protectors, with their impressive-looking uniforms and blank-cartridge rifles.

The only real loss involved was that our announcer had cleverly acquired a way of making his voice tremble dramatically as he raised his right hand and declaimed: "The rifle bearahs are for your protection.

The trainah will protect himself!" The announcer hated to lose lines. And I didn't blame him a bit. What a shame to deprive him of this priceless speech after he had learned to deliver it with so much feeling!

One of the most amusing letters I have ever received came from a school-teacher who asked her pupils to write a "composition" on my act after they had been to see the circus. She sent me all of the papers that were turned in. Several of them provided hearty laughs, and two or three of them were classics of their kind, especially one that read:

Clyde Beatty is a trainer. He trains animals. He trains them by shooting them and hitting them on the head with a whip. Sometimes he hits them with a chair. He makes them jump around a lot and do many tricks. He has more lions and tigers than in the zoo. He has about a hundred lions and about a hundred tigers. And they all do tricks. When they do not obey, he hits them on the head or shoots them and then they obey. The lions and the tigers roar. They roar and roar. But he does not mind. Sometime they try to scratch him with a paw. But he does not mind. He just keeps on making them do tricks. He was making a lion jump over a fence. The lion did not want to jump over the fence. The lion tried to knock him down. So he hit him on the head with a chair and shot him. So the lion obeyed and jumped over the fence.

Another of these compositions mentioned the fact that I worked with thirty-nine lions and fifty-two tigers. The young author wrote:

The lions and tigers could eat Mr. Beatty if they wanted to, but my Dad said Mr. Beatty feeds them before he puts them in the ring. He is no fool, Dad says. Dad says he does this because if he feeds them first they will not want to eat

him up. This is a good idea. Because if you give the animals something to eat before you start doing tricks they will not be hungry. That is why Mr. Beatty is safe and has nothing to fear. Dad says there is nothing to the act. Dad could do it but he has no lions and he has no tigers. Dad says even if they didn't get fed first there is nothing to the act because Mr. Beatty pulls out their teeth and clause [*sic*] before he makes them do tricks. I like the act. It is very exciting. Dad says its no good. Dad says its a big fake. I like the part where the tiger rolls over like a dog. But this is a fake. Dad says the tiger is too old to hurt anybody. Dad used to go hunting. He shot a deer. Dad says noboddy in their right mind would go in with lions and tigers that wasn't too old or had their clause and tooth pulled. Dad says if they didn't have their clause and tooth pulled then they must be doped. It couldn't be on the levvel. He says its a fake.

This letter (which I quote exactly, errors in spelling and all), despite its amusing crudities, is typical of those I so often receive from persons who have no use for animal-trainers. For the benefit of more than one skeptic I've pointed out the claws and teeth of my performing beasts. These animals are on exhibit in the menagerie tent before the show starts; but even if you try to convince a real Doubting Thomas by taking him there, you can't be sure of success. One gentleman (if I may be allowed that exaggeration) insisted on seeing the animals from a position right outside the arena, demanding, "How do I know those animals on exhibit are the ones used in the show?" Then, when I had convinced him, as we stood outside the big cage, of the realness of the claws and teeth, he asked me point-blank, thus reminding me of the little boy's father, whether I ever doped my animals. When I told him to stop asking silly questions—for one reaches the end of

his patience after a while—he seemed hurt. This man, I neglected to say, belonged to a "humane society" and he was investigating me.

He didn't like me any better when I told him the story of how while I was playing in a small town in the South an elderly gentleman who was seated close to the arena kept yelling to me: "Come on out! Come on out!" An attendant, standing beside the bars of the big cage, informed me the gentleman represented the local "humane society" and that he had a long list of questions to ask me, all neatly typed.

The next time the old geezer yelled, "Come on out!" I replied, "Come on in!"

He should have accepted my invitation, for his list of questions revealed that he thought I doped my animals "into easy submission," and surely that should have given him a feeling of safety!

Afterward, when we got together and he confronted me with this opinion of his that I doped my beasts, I asked him how he explained my twenty trips to the hospital in consequence of attacks in the arena. "No more than you deserve!" was his irrational reply. Not a very humane member of a humane society, I thought.

Of all the mail I receive, the most annoying is a certain type of effusively complimentary letter. Such correspondence sometimes represents nothing more or less than the gushing nature of the writer; at other times the letters have a catch in them. I have a prize example spread out before me. It reads:

DEAR MR. BEATTY:

I saw your wonderful act last night and words fail me as I sit down and try to figure out a way of telling you how

much I was impressed by the marvelous performance you gave. I consider you one of our greatest living Americans. As a local business man proud of my native city of —— I will consider it an honor to present a resolution at the next meeting of the local Chamber of Commerce, to which I belong, requesting that —— Avenue be changed to Beatty Avenue and that appropriate ceremonies take place when and if the change is made. I dare say my fellow members will gladly join me in bringing about such a deserved honoring of the Lindbergh of the animal ring. I will see that the occasion is timed so that you may be on hand and hear from the lips of Mayor —— himself what this community thinks of you. We are particularly proud of you because you hail from our own state of —— [*The State mentioned was not Ohio, where I was born.—C.B.*] and we are keenly desirous of giving voice to our pride.

In the meantime, we hope you will honor us by speaking at the annual dinner of the —— Association the day after tomorrow. We realize you will not be playing in our city on that day but we have arranged to have an automobile meet you at —— and you will be personally escorted to the dinner by a committee of local celebrities. May we have your acceptance by return messenger?

The most uncomplimentary letter in the world is preferable to this kind of rubbish. There is a tartness about the comments of the brick-tossers that sometimes makes good reading. My gushing correspondents are almost invariably bores, and frequently they make unreasonable requests. My correspondent quoted above actually expected me to drive a hundred and twenty miles—sixty miles each way—after playing a matinée and an evening performance, for the privilege of addressing a meaningless gathering. My explanation that I never make speeches did not suffice. A speech would be written for me and I could read it. Or I could con-

fine myself to a few impromptu remarks. "Just come and say hello to the boys," my second message requested. And that evening the show was due to pack up and leave for still another town! I needn't worry about that, I was told. They would get me back to the circus cars if it meant driving till dawn. Very considerate, I thought, but dawn was a bit too close to my next matinée.

Misguided enterprise brings in some unconsciously funny letters. Among the best of these are the ones from local merchants offering to pay me so much per performance to wear a sign on my back advertising their wares. I received one very flattering offer to advertise a miniature golf-course in the days when that forgotten craze had America in its grip. The owner was more than a little puzzled when I turned him down. "You wouldn't have to wear a very big sign," he pointed out. "It wouldn't get in the way." I let him down gently by suggesting that he advertise in our program instead, solemnly declaring that I should be fired if I entered the arena wearing a sign. And did he want me to be fired?

Less than a month after I got rid of the miniature-golf gentleman, I was approached by another business man who also wanted me to enter the big cage with a sign on my back. His plan, he assured me, was no ordinary advertising scheme. He wrote:

I have cooked up a clever hook-up, that is as good an ad for you as it is for me because it refers to your specialty. I run a dancing school in town here. And I want you to carry a cardboard sign on your back saying: "Be a Social Lion. Learn to Dance at

Great idea, don't you think? The lion angle ties up swell with your act. Won't they laugh when we pull that one! Will be down to see you later in the day with the sign. I had it made by the best sign painter in town. He's a darb! He's even got a lion on it. Some lion, too. Looks like a real one and no mistake.

I succeeded in discouraging this learn-to-dance magnate, but it was no easy undertaking. I managed to keep him out of my dressing-room, but I could not keep the sign out. It arrived by messenger, with a note even more touching than the first. And there *was* a lion on it, as promised—that is, a figure that resembled a lion. It had a strange woolly coat that wasn't especially leonine, but the animal's head might have passed for that of a lion; and there was the inevitable mane, so it *must* have been a lion.

In the second note the dance impresario said he hoped I realized that I had as much to gain as he had, etc. He wound up by boosting his price for my services as sign-bearer. I believed the poor man meant well, so I sent his sign back with tickets for two good seats at the show, and a brief note saying that I could not accept his offer without breaking my contract.

For some time our publicity department, in press-agenting my act, gave considerable space to Nellie, Gracie, and Rosie, three of my best performers that you meet elsewhere in these pages. Nero, my prize lion and the arena boss, was always given the most attention, but the three females mentioned got their share of publicity and became quite well known.

So it wasn't surprising that I occasionally received letters bearing the signature Nellie Whoozis, Gracie

Whatchermercalle, or Rosie Soandso. One of these letters began:

I am glad you called one of your lions Nellie. You must like the name Nellie and I am glad you do. It is an old-fashioned name and I am an old-fashioned girl. You must be an old-fashioned man or you wouldn't call an animal Nellie.

The writer concluded by inviting me to her home for dinner. Her parents, she pointed out, were old-fashioned too and she was sure I'd like them.

Perhaps the harshest letter I've ever received came from a person who signed himself (or herself?) "Dog Lover." The papers had just carried a story telling how Jiggs, a black leopard I was using at the time in a mixed group, had killed a dog that had been allowed to stray too close to the bars of the animal's cage. This was before the show started and the leopard, along with my other performing beasts, had been added to the regular menagerie group for exhibition purposes. A careless master had permitted the dog, which should have been on a leash in so dangerous a place, to wander too close to the bars of Jiggs's cage and the vicious cat (black leopards are a devilish lot) reached out, grabbed the helpless animal, and dragged it into the cage. Before anything could be done to prevent the tragedy, Jiggs literally tore his luckless victim to pieces and began to consume the carcase.

It was one of those sickening accidents that will happen now and then. While the dog was a small one, the bar spaces of Jiggs's cage were narrow and I still don't understand how the leopard managed his diabolical feat.

"Dog Lover" had plenty to say to me. He—for I believe the letter came from a man—called me some pretty hard names. If I had any decent instincts, if I had the slightest appreciation of dogs, I would have taken precautions to make such a horrible occurrence impossible. It was plain to be seen that I was a cold, inhuman sort of person who had no use for animals unless they belonged to the cat family. No doubt I was the type, the writer went on, who could learn to grow fond of brutes like leopards, but who would probably kick a dog if it got in my way. The gentleman gave no name or address or I'd have replied that my favorite animal in all the world is Timber, my police dog. I seldom go anywhere without him. He tours the country with me and when the season is over he goes where I go. We are inseparable.

When I was attacked by Nero early in 1932 and sent to the hospital for ten weeks, I received the kindest letters it has ever been my good fortune to get. One woman sent me a big cake with my steel arena reproduced on it in chocolate icing. I didn't see the cake for almost a week; for the day it arrived I was desperately ill and the doctors were trying to decide whether or not to amputate my right leg. I also received a rabbit's foot and a "good luck" ring.

So, all in all, I can't complain. On the whole the people who see my act are very kind to me. Most of the scoldings I receive are due to a lack of knowledge of what is going on in the big cage, misguided zeal, or an unsympathetic attitude toward my strange profession.

## X

### *Animals and the Elements*

ONE of the many things an animal-trainer has to know is how to handle his charges when a storm comes up. As some animals become panicky and are likely to grow unmanageable when a storm really gets under way, it is important for a trainer to be able to recognize the signs of restlessness shown by some of his more sensitive performers almost as soon as the clouds begin to gather, so that he may take such action as is necessary.

This is mainly applicable to engagements "under canvas"—another way of saying it applies to most circus engagements, for ninety-five per cent of all dates are played under the big top. There are very few auditoriums in the country big enough to house a modern circus.

The most serious danger as far as the weather is concerned is the sudden developing of an electrical storm while the trainer is in the arena with his animals. The narrowest escape of my career, in a storm of this kind, was fairly recent. It took place at Greensburg, Pennsylvania, July 1, 1932. I don't often take the trouble to note down the exact town and date where something has happened to me, but weather trouble always makes an indelible impression on my mind, especially when it consists of an electrical storm. Nothing gives me the

willies quite so surely as the thought of thunder and lightning catching up with me while I happen to be in the ring putting my lions and tigers through their paces.

Several times, I've escaped an experience of this kind by ten to twenty minutes, but it was not until the Greensburg affair that I missed by seconds being killed in consequence of a thunder-and-lightning storm.

I was playing a matinée on the day to which I refer. There had been no indications up to the time I entered the arena that the heavens were planning an electrical display; so I gave no more thought to weather conditions in Greensburg, Pennsylvania, than I did to those in Needles, California, or Troy, New York, or any other place you can think of.

Without warning, as I neared the two-thirds point of my act, the arena suddenly grew dark and I could hear the loosened poles of the tent structure bobbing up and down—an unmistakable sign that a heavy gale was blowing. I could have looked around and gathered in a few more confirming details, but it was up to me to keep my eyes on my animals.

I know no better example of instantaneous reaction to a given situation than the restlessness the creatures began to show the very second the arena darkened. At once they grew hazy about cues and showed an unresponsiveness that could be attributed only to the sudden change in the weather. Some of them became positively uncontrollable, including the normally easy-going Venus. I was getting ready to put her through the roll-over stunt in a half-darkened arena, when there was a terrific clap of thunder.

I had tremendous difficulty in prevailing upon Venus

to leave her high seat for the floor pedestal from which I cue her for the roll-over. I used all the persuasiveness at my command and just as she was moving her paws over the edge of the seat-top by way of indicating that she had finally made up her mind to perform, there was another ear-splitting clap of thunder that sent her cowering back. In fact, she withdrew so hastily that she almost went toppling off her pedestal, righting herself only by an effort of will.

Venus had my complete sympathy. I don't like electric storms any more than she does. But there was the audience. Crowds under a big top always grow restive when thunder and lightning start, and the best way of making them even more so is to show in your conduct, as you perform for them, that you are worried too. That's always been an excellent way to cause a rush for the exits.

As the sound of thunder smote my ears again, I made a quick decision to finish the roll-over business as quickly as possible and skip the rest of the act. Having started to cue Venus to leave her pedestal, I felt it would be bad psychology to give up. It would have made an uneasy audience more uneasy.

Overhead, I could see the dislodged tent poles swinging; in fact, a quick glance upward convinced me that the situation was becoming serious, for a blow from one of these heavy poles is capable of killing a spectator. I feverishly resumed my efforts to coax Venus from her high seat. After what seemed an hour and was probably less than half a minute she came scrambling down to the floor of the arena and took the seat from which I get her to stalk me and then do the roll-over.

The lights in the big top began to behave queerly as I gave Venus the soft whistle cue by means of which I get her to leave the low seat and come toward me. As I have said, we carry our own power-plant with the show, and as the lights dimmed, flickered, and brightened, only to grow dim again, I knew that the storm had damaged the equipment in some way. The animals ranged on pedestals around the arena grew more and more restless as the lights continued to flicker. Half my performers were well forward on their pedestals, as if preparing to leap.

I enticed Venus off her floor seat and got her started on the roll-over stunt as another great clap of thunder came. One roll-over was enough for me. Usually I call upon Venus—or Rosie, whichever animal is doing the trick—for several encores, making the animal wind up closer and closer to me with each repetition. But I was not striving for effects now.

The roll-over completed, I had a plausible wind-up for the act, for there is a certain conclusiveness about this trick. It might easily be used as a finale. I signaled to the boy at the tunnel door to let the animals out. For a second or two he stood as if in a trance, for he now expected me to put Nero, Cæsar, and other lions over the hurdles, which normally was the next part of the act.

"Let 'em out!" I yelled as I made for the safety-cage, and the spell was broken. The boy rattled the door and opened it and the animals started leaping from their pedestals and leaving the arena.

As I reached the safety-cage and looked around, I realized that conditions were even more serious than I had thought, and I congratulated myself on cutting my

act short by three or four minutes. The tent was all "ballooned out" and more and more wind was getting under the canvas. I was afraid we were going to suffer that worst of all circus calamities, a "blow-down." Outside, the wind was howling and overhead the loosened poles were swinging more wildly than before. Spectators were frantically ducking as circus hands strove to grab the flying poles.

The animals were now out of the arena and in the tunnel, being fed back into their cages, when there came a terrific downpour of rain, accompanied by thunder and all that goes with it. A freakish bolt of lightning hit the arena—obviously it started contact from some higher point—and for a second or two I could hardly believe what I saw; and the same must have been true of my circus associates and the huddled spectators. The arena, during this brief and awful moment, looked as if it were on fire. Each bar seemed to have jagged flames coming from it.

Then, as quickly as it came, the fire flashed out and we were all in semi-darkness as the electric lights began to flicker again.

If I had not cut my act short I should have been inside the arena with my lions and tigers when lightning struck the cage and I shudder to think what would have happened. The result might have been the worst accident in the history of animal-training.

That bolt of lightning traveled weirdly. It had no effect on people who seemed near enough to be hurt and it knocked down others who seemed to be more safely located. The most badly shaken up were five of our ushers. Two of these were quickly revived, but the other three had to be carried out to the medical tent,

where Dr. Cox, the circus physician, worked on them and brought them around.

Old circus hands—and we have men who have been in the business for from twenty-five to forty years and have lived through some tough weather conditions, including electrical storms that caused blow-downs—said they could recall nothing comparable to that freakish lightning-bolt at Greensburg which diffused itself so peculiarly and knocked down several people but actually injured no one.

Fortunately the storm spent itself quickly and we were able to quiet the audience and go on with the show. Jess Adkins, our manager, stood by like the valiant captain of a ship in distress, and I attribute to his coolness and quick thinking the fact that no one was injured. A few people suffered from fright, but they were normal again when our clowns, doing an inspired job, swung into action and started 'em laughing.

I'll never forget that picture of Adkins grabbing flying tent poles as he issued commands all over the place. Not many seconds after the lightning struck the arena and I was recovering from the shock that accompanied my thoughts of what might have happened if I had been in the arena with my lions and tigers when that bolt lit up the bars, I found myself beside Adkins, grabbing unruly poles, that swung down near spectators. I don't really remember how I got there, but there I was obeying his commands, along with scores of others who probably were as hazy as I was about what was happening.

Elephants are the greatest potential trouble-makers when a storm comes up, for they become terrified in a

situation of this kind more quickly than any other animals and are capable of doing more damage. Sometimes, as in the case of the Greensburg storm, the management has sufficient warning—even a few minutes will suffice—of the storm's approach and there is time to get the big beasts under control.

On certain occasions, however, storms have come up with complete unexpectedness and then the elephants presented a real problem.

During a storm in Salina, Kansas, in 1923, I had a chance to see, first-hand, what these great creatures are capable of doing by way of standing a circus on its head.

With breath-taking suddenness one Sunday, a howling Kansas wind-storm, one of those near-cyclones, came tearing out of nowhere to raise the devil with us. On account of the Kansas Blue Law we were not allowed to rear the big top on Sunday. This law proved a life-saver, for if the big top had been up when the storm made its sudden visitation, we should have had one of the quickest blow-downs on record; for no tent that was ever made could have stood up in that gale.

It was perfectly legal, it seems, to rear our menagerie tent, cook-top, etc. These had as much chance in the gale that blew as if they had been made of paper. The cook-top blew over without any protest and the menagerie tent was torn to shreds in less time than I take to tell it.

Before anything could be done to get them under control, our elephants stamped and they were all over the town of Salina in no time at all. Nothing worse could have happened to us; for, by a strange coincidence, the year before, Snyder, the bad-man of the

elephant world, had got loose in this very town while playing with another show.

In case you do not recall the head-lines of the next day, let me say that Snyder did a thorough job of terrorizing the town; and now the whole of Salina, remembering the all but fatal rampaging of our berserk predecessor, broke into a community cold sweat. Our management also sweated, for stampeding elephants have a genius for running up bills for property damage and always give the show's adjuster a real day's work the morning after, although, in such cases, the circus breathes easily if property damage is the only resultant headache. It is injury to individuals, and possible loss of life, that cause the real sinking feeling in the business office. Two or three successful suits against a circus that is unfortunate enough to let its dangerous animals get loose—assuming these suits are handled by determined lawyers with a proper regard for a row of naughts after any given numeral—can shut a show down completely, and have been known to do so. Circuses, if they have the available cash, have a habit of paying up, even when the elements have played a dirty trick on them and are far more responsible for the damage than the management. The typical circus attitude is that it is much easier to pay than to argue.

We were really pretty lucky in Salina. Our elephants demolished a few store fronts and wrecked a gasoline station, but were kind enough not to kill or injure any one. They were rounded up and brought back to the circus grounds without half the headaches we perspiringly anticipated. The management was almost cheerful as it paid the bills for property damages. After all, no one had been hurt and that was the main thing.

Our camels and horses also had stampeded and gotten loose in the town and we rounded them up as well. Again we were lucky, for these runaways had in their wild and aimless wanderings injured no one. The outcome of the incident was one of the luckiest of its kind a circus has ever experienced.

Mention Warren, Ohio, to any one connected with the management of the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus and he will suddenly act like a man who is having a seizure of some kind. For Warren, Ohio, is the town where during the 1932 summer season we encountered a storm that came so close to blowing us down that I get the jitters whenever I think of it. Why the big top didn't collapse, no one will ever know. After the vicious manner in which the wind assailed us for the first five minutes, the betting should have been at least two to one that this main tent of ours wouldn't last another ten minutes. It swayed and rocked drunkenly and was due to topple if ever a big top was.

It ballooned out until it seemed about to burst like an overblown bladder. But it wasn't obeying any of the natural laws. Also, the management was again on the job. Boss Adkins, swinging quickly into action as he always does in emergencies, had gathered up a miscellaneous crew of circus workers and assigned them to the task of standing on the overlapping canvas of the tent walls to keep the wind out. The tent, still puffed up like a giant balloon, resumed more and more normal proportions as more and more men came dashing over to stand on the flopping canvas sides.

We were playing to a capacity audience at the time and it's always bad when things go wrong in the pres-

ence of a full house. Despite the helpful intervention of the motley crew of circus hands that came to the rescue, the tent acted so drunkenly that the management decided to pull out some of the side wall poles and drop that part of the main tent that was facing the wind. This meant moving spectators to places of safety away from the section of the canvas that was to be dropped to the ground. Reseating over a thousand people, which is what the move necessitated, is no easy matter.

Once more the elephants were our chief concern. In the case of a storm each elephant-keeper is required to take his place beside his elephant. Hook ready for use, he must rush his charge out of the menagerie tent. Strangely enough, it is easier to handle elephants in a storm once they are outdoors.

The keepers have orders to chain the big beasts together in pairs at a time like this, hobbling the fore legs.

Every elephant troupe has a leader. In the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus, this rôle is filled by an eighty-year-old pachyderm named Lizzie, and more familiarly known as "Old Liz."

Once a storm gets under way the elephants start trumpeting madly, and in our show the surest way of restoring some semblance of morale is to chain the scariest elephant to Old Liz. The idea is to prevent the agitated beast from stampeding the troupe.

The keepers, as the Warren storm increased in violence, rushed the elephants out of their tent. But before the creatures could be paired off and hobbled, one of them made for an open field straight ahead, a move that looked like the beginning of a stampede. After going

about twenty yards, the runaway slowed down and looked over his shoulder to see what Old Liz was doing. The stanch old herd-leader stood motionless as if cemented to the ground. The runaway, now definitely half-hearted in his movements, trotted forward another ten yards, looking over his shoulder again at Liz as he did so. The ancient lady did not budge an inch. Convinced by this time that Liz didn't approve of a stampede, the runaway, discouraged, stood still in his tracks and let his keeper come up and grab him with an elephant-hook. Meekly the animal returned to where his companions stood, all of them apparently willing to stay on the reservation as long as Old Liz seemed calm and content.

We weathered the storm and finally went on with our performance. A few patrons, indignant over the delay in getting it started, demanded their money back, and were paid. Stamping off in a rage, they vowed never to patronize such incompetents again. Little did they know how much sheer ability it took to put on a show that day.

Others of our audience, apparently realizing that we had put up a pretty brave fight to make a performance possible, applauded everything vigorously, sometimes giving a hand before anything happened. Every audience has its share of good sports, and that is one of the reasons why circus performers are ready and willing most of the time to put on a show in the face of anything short of a tidal wave or an earthquake. I've met plenty of bad sports in the course of my career as a trainer, but they are outnumbered by the good ones; and I am not idly tossing circus-goers a bouquet, either.

Circus fans often have to put up with discomforts decreed by the elements, and if most of 'em aren't sporting about it, I don't know good sports when I see 'em.

Bad weather always accomplishes startling things in the circus world. On occasion, it brings together utterly dissimilar branches of the show that might not, under normal circumstances, meet.

A major circus is a big sprawling organization and sometimes it is the proud boast of the Australian whip-cracker that he has never seen the Indian bow-and-arrow expert at work. And sometimes the Indian regretfully makes it known that he has never seen the whip-cracker; he has heard of him, of course, and hopes to see him perform some day, when it happens to be convenient, etc.

One day, about two years ago, a member of our freak show declared rather peevishly that he didn't understand why so many spectators wasted their time, before the real performance began, looking at the animals in the menagerie. If he were a spectator, the freak said, he would certainly spend more time taking in the wonders of the side-show. He himself had never even seen the animals in the menagerie, and he had no feeling that he had missed anything. He added that he had no intention of *ever* looking at them.

But he had reckoned without the elements. A fearful storm came up a few days after this animal-hater made his boast, and blew down the freak top. It was as if a giant had suddenly exhaled and caught unprepared those he was breathing upon. The side-show tent went down in an unprotesting heap and became so much limp and floppy canvas.

The poor freaks had to go somewhere and when one of their company headed for the near-by menagerie top they all, sheep fashion, made for this same destination. Spectators viewing the animals were astonished by the sudden influx of the side-show's strange people.

Figure the thing out for yourself. Suppose you were peacefully looking at some animals, when all of a sudden there came rushing toward you a badly disorganized army consisting of a group of midgets, a band of African "pinheads," an armless wonder, "the tallest man that ever lived," "the world's homeliest woman," and other oddities including a freak who had vowed he would never look at the animals. The animals looked at this particular freak and his associates, and he and his associates looked at the animals; in one quick glance the quadrupeds got an eyeful of freaks and the freaks got an eyeful of quadrupeds. Both groups, I trust, found it a valuable experience; for most of the freaks had never seen the animals, and I'm sure the animals had seen very few freaks. Bad weather, that sterling leveler and educator, had brought together two sections of our organization that rarely have anything to do with each other, making us look more like the "one big happy family" that the barkers grow so lyrical about.

The animals, particularly the lions and tigers, were reacting with characteristic nervousness to the storm that was in progress. They lunged excitedly at the bars and displayed anything but a pleased-to-meet-you attitude. The freaks, I must admit, didn't seem overimpressed with the animals, devoting themselves as much to shelter-seeking as to sight-seeing.

It was the spectators in the menagerie tent, especially the children, that seemed to get the most fun out of the

situation. Not sure how to take the sudden arrival of the freaks, they accepted it as an extra side-show that was being put on for their benefit and they followed the circus's strange people from cage to cage until the storm subsided.

No chapter dealing with wild animals and the elements is complete without a story about the reaction of wild beasts to fire.

About ten years ago, when I was with the Gollmar Brothers' Circus, we had winter quarters in the outskirts of Montgomery, Alabama. We were on our way to our new winter quarters at Peru, Indiana, where our show was to change hands and become known as the John Robinson Show.

It was the night of the day before we were to leave. I had loaded my animals on the cars and left for the town, four miles away, to see a show. (That is what a showman, off duty, often does.) When I returned, about midnight, I went to bed in my quarters in one of the cars. Tired, I stretched out, dozed, and soon was sleeping soundly.

In my sleep my hand touched the window of my berth and I awoke with a start. The glass was painfully hot. Looking out the window, I could see a fire. The elephant car was ablaze!

Fortunately, the car was empty. It was a regular practice not to load the elephants until we were ready to start; so that the pachyderms were safe. However, our lions and tigers, in flat-cars within full view of the flames, were going crazy. They lunged at the bars of their cages with a fury I have never seen equaled. The fire had spread terror among them and they were de-

terminated to get away from it if it were possible to escape from those cages.

We got some heavy chains, and, with many horses tugging away, succeeded in pulling the burning car to a place on the tracks where it was not likely to set fire to anything else. But even after the flames had been extinguished, our big cats went on lunging furiously at the cage bars. Perhaps the smell of smoke and charred wood upset them. We put the cage-fronts on (it was a warm evening and these had been left off to give the inmates more air), but the animals continued to hurl themselves at the bars. For two hours after the fire was out they kept up the mad performance. The next morning there wasn't a lion, tiger, or leopard in the show that didn't have a badly bruised nose or forehead as a result of this frenzied reaction to the fire. Two tigers and a lion had banged their heads so badly they had to be kept out of the performing ring for a whole week.

## XI

### *Lion Mother*

**A**N ANIMAL-TRAINER has many experiences that have nothing to do with the arena. On more than one occasion, for instance, the birth of a litter of cubs has set in motion a whole series of unexpected events.

I am reminded of the time Ethel, one of my finest lionesses, was having her first litter. The birth of these cubs changed the mother's career in a way that no one could have predicted.

In a darkened cage, Ethel brought two baby lions into the world. In the jungle, lionesses always pick a dark spot in which to give birth to their young, and in the circus we always imitate nature by darkening the cage of the prospective mother, one of the chief reasons for this being that the eyes of the new-comers are benefited by the shutting out of light.

Poor Ethel, flopping around in her darkened cage, sat on one of her offspring and the little thing died almost instantly. The other cub survived, but did not thrive, because its mother was not allowing it to nurse sufficiently. Inexperienced in the ways of motherhood, Ethel didn't seem to know what to do about this newcomer by her side. Such helplessness is not necessarily peculiar to animals born in captivity. Zoölogists have recorded instances of certain types of "first mothers"—both lionesses and tigresses—revealing a similar be-

wilderment in giving birth to young ones in their native haunts.

After about two weeks I had a very sickly youngster on my hands and it was plain to be seen that the cub would not survive if I did not take it away from its mother and have it nursed by artificial means. When the young one was about sixteen days old I removed it from Ethel's cage and arranged to have it fed milk with a syringe something like a good-sized eye-dropper. The next stage was to feed it from a nippled bottle.

From the time that cub was taken away from her, Ethel began to droop. This was exceptional—which is why I consider the story worth telling—for usually lionesses do not miss their young, no matter how soon after birth the cubs are removed. In fact, I've known cases where the mothers gave every indication of being relieved to get rid of their babies. "That's that," appeared to be their attitude, in several instances that I recall; "and now for a resumption of my normal way of living."

I would not vouch for those particular thoughts in the mind of any lioness or tigress; but I do remember mother tabbies—I'm referring to the great cats, of course—who almost seemed to thank me for taking their offspring away. Perhaps these ladies had "gone modern" and decided that children interfered with their careers as performers. That is something that one of the animal psychologists will have to unravel; and, whoever he is, I hope he'll sound more convincing than most of the writers who figure out, in elaborate detail, what is going on inside the minds of wild beasts.

Ethel virtually stopped eating. She lay by the hour in a floppy heap in the back of her cage, failing to re-

spond to my call or to that of any one else. Before the trials of motherhood overtook her, she would leap spiritedly to the bars when I passed her cage and called to her. One of the liveliest animals in my act, she always suggested something on rubber pads as she bounded around the arena. Now she was a study in sodden inertia and it made me sad to think of her livelier days. Her eyes, once glowing and fiery, were dull and heavy and I was so anxious to restore her to her former bouncing ebullience that for several days I concerned myself exclusively with her and almost forgot two new tigers that I was scheduled to break for arena work. We were in winter quarters at the time and as I had no performances to give I was able to devote more time to Ethel than would have been the case normally.

I was confronted with a real problem. The cub was thriving on its bottle diet and it hardly seemed fair to the youngster to put it back with a mother that did not know how to take care of it. At the same time, it would be just too bad to let Ethel pine away if there were any way of helping her. She was eating almost nothing and losing weight rapidly.

I tried running her into the arena for exercise. It was not easy to persuade her to leave her cage; and when, after much effort, I got her into the ring, she would lie down and show as little interest in life as before. I had hoped that if I could induce her to take a work-out in the arena she might develop an appetite and show an interest in food. Instead, she merely flopped in a heap in almost any spot in the arena, and stayed that way, a dangerous proceeding; for animals do not possess as much gallantry as fiction-writers endow them with, and a beast that chooses an arena alive

with animals as a place to take a rest is likely to get into trouble.

Ethel upset all my calculations, for I could not understand even the most broken-hearted animal exposing herself to attack in this foolish fashion. I had handled hundreds of lions and I had no precedent for a member of the species rolling over and inviting another lion to deal out punishment. Ethel had not stretched herself out in this fashion for more than a few seconds when a big husky male came along and dealt her a good clout with his paw.

Although the lioness had a good record as a scrapper, she made little effort to defend herself. She confined herself to slapping weakly at her attacker, and only the well-aimed prods of watchful attendants saved her. Another theory exploded! I had believed that one thing my drooping invalid needed was company. Wrong again, by gosh! No matter how much you know about animals, it is always possible to make a bad guess. Wild beasts—and this applies particularly to lions and tigers—are well-nigh incalculable.

Ethel was becoming a sadder-looking object by the minute. Instead of her fur lying flat against her back, the individual hairs stood up drearily—an unmistakable sign of a sick animal. In addition, her skin was painfully baggy. She pathetically suggested a creature that was trying to sport a hide too roomy for her skinny body. Three months after I removed the cub from Ethel's cage, my lion mother had faded away until I felt that unless something could be done about it, the animal would surely die.

The cub was now eating meat and I decided to put it back with its mother to see if this would help. When

I restored it to its mother's cage, the lioness acted as if less than nothing had happened! She manifested no interest at all in the cub.

Whether she did not recognize the baby lion as her own or whether she had ceased to care is one of those mysteries that no one will ever solve. Three months' growth make a tremendous difference in a lion cub and the spirited youngster I now put in Ethel's cage was a totally different animal from the sickly cub I had removed. A playful, peppery tot, the youngster hardly suggested a blood-relationship to the sluggish lioness that stared blankly at the cage floor and did not take the trouble to look at the new-comer.

The cub, refusing to be ignored, nuzzled against its mother's face, but Ethel paid not the slightest attention to her offspring. Determined to get some show of recognition, the babe licked its mother's face. Bored, Ethel laboriously got to her feet and wearily moved to a corner of the cage, turning her back on her young one as she stretched out. It was a thorough and devastating way of telling the cub that its presence did not matter.

I was keenly disappointed over the outcome of my experiment, but I was not yet willing to concede defeat. I believed that a few days would make a great deal of difference and that the brooding lioness might yet take an interest in her dashing young one.

As I stood at the bars taking in the scene, I found myself smiling, pathetic as the situation was. I was amused by the baby lion's determination. The back that had been turned on him with such finality did not discourage him one little bit. He romped over to where his mother lay motionless, like so much lion skin stuffed with sawdust, and patted her with one paw. No re-

sponse. This time he half leaped up on her, so that both paws rested on her hind quarters. Again no response.

Still determined to get a rise out of Ethel, the youngster leaped right up on the lioness's back. With a suddenness that I'll never forget, the sluggish animal roused herself, and, whirling around, sent the cub spinning with a terrific blow of the paw. Then, before anything could be done to prevent it, she sprang straight at the helpless youngster and sank her teeth into the neck, snapping it with one terrible bite. The cub was dead before any one could enter the cage.

It was the strangest and bitterest animal tragedy of my career. Ethel had killed her own son, the cub whose removal from her cage had made her pine away.

Normally, I find it difficult to waste much sympathy on killers. Ethel's case was different. Here was an animal that had been a responsive performer until she had had that first fateful litter—an alert, intelligent beast that had never manifested any killer instincts. I made up my mind to do something for her if it was humanly possible. It became a definite ambition of mine to see if I could not restore her to a state at least approaching her former sprightliness.

Her listlessness continued after the killing of the cub. She was now touching hardly any of her meat; so I took her off a meat diet completely. I fed her milk and eggs. She manifested a fair interest in her new diet or I should not have been able to keep her alive. The milk was mixed with a tonic that a veterinary prescribed. The animal began to perk up and show some interest in life. She was far removed from any real vigor, but she was plainly improving.

One day, Ethel sprang another surprise. She sud-

denly roused herself from a reclining position after eating and made a lunge for the attendant who was cleaning her cage. The boy, made careless by her sluggishness, was unable to get away in time. The lioness got him by the arm and was pulling him closer and closer to the bars when another attendant, hearing the cries for help, rushed up and drove the animal off with a heavy cage-scraper. The boy's arm was badly torn and only prompt and effective medical treatment saved it. For a few hours we thought amputation would be necessary.

Ethel was now more of a problem than ever. I still had faith in her and felt that the grief she had suffered was responsible for her seeming viciousness. Her attack on the boy, I argued, didn't necessarily prove anything. A lion is always a lion and the best of 'em can't resist an opportunity to claw any one who is careless enough to approach the bars too closely.

I was more eager than ever to rehabilitate the animal. As a performer, she had always seemed happy, responding to my commands with real zest; and I decided that the next move was to try to restore her as a member of my lion-tiger act. A sizable undertaking, I must admit, but one worth trying. So many of my gambles have worked out in the course of my experience as a trainer that I'm always willing to take a chance.

I started Ethel by turning her loose for exercise with a group of lionesses. She made me feel she could take care of herself, by socking a lady lion that seemed to resent her reentering the arena. I liked the way Ethel went about the business of defending herself. She smacked her assailant, and, seeing that she had scored her point, went trotting around the arena without mak-

ing any effort to begin a real scrap. This was not the conduct of a killer.

After a while Ethel was showing as much spirit during the exercise period as her arena-mates and I was convinced that she was ready to resume activities as a performer. At least three times she demonstrated a definite ability to take care of herself without starting a civil war and this was enough to make me feel that she was on the road to recovery.

I put her in the arena alone to see how she would respond to her old cues. At first she responded reluctantly, but after a while I was pedestaling her with ease and moving her from seat to seat in the arena without difficulty.

The next step was to work her with the other animals. This was harder. Ethel seemed interested in showing, for the benefit of her arena-mates, that she was not afraid of me. Instead of springing up on her pedestal she would walk toward it in leisurely fashion, turning around every half-second or so and looking at me. Half the time I didn't know whether she planned to spring up the pedestal or spring at me. Once she did come for me but without much conviction. I turned her with my chair and blank-cartridge pistol. Up the pedestal she went, and stayed there until I called upon her to leap to the arena floor and perform a solo stunt.

Just then I was busy getting ready for some post-season dates (my season usually closes in October or November, but almost invariably I am called upon to play special winter engagements) and I had no time to waste. But I was touched by the tragedy that had entered Ethel's life and I was willing to give her all the time in the world to pull herself together. I was

still playing the hunch that if I could rehabilitate her as a performer her troubles would be over.

One day, about a week before I was scheduled to play my first post-season date, Ethel apparently felt that she had behaved herself long enough, and that it was now time to gum things up. Without warning, during a rehearsal, she leaped from the high seat in the pyramid to which I had assigned her to a slightly lower seat occupied by a tiger. She grabbed the striped cat by the back of the neck and held on. In the ensuing struggle the pedestal was upset and both animals went over in a heap. In falling they landed on top of a lion on a low seat. This maned cat that never liked tigers anyhow decided that the striped cat Ethel had attacked was to blame and made for this beast with a vengeance. Other lions joined the fray and soon I had another one of those free-for-all fights in the arena. It was a pitched battle that developed serious proportions and the only intelligent thing for me to do was to get out of the big cage. When a scrap like this is on, the participants go temporarily mad and only a lunatic would attempt to separate them.

I picked my way along the bars, one hand behind my back and my chair and gun in the other. Fights were going on all around me.

I had almost reached the safety-cage when it occurred to Ethel to let up on the tiger she was fighting (she was dealing this striped enemy, a heavier animal, as much punishment as she was receiving) and devote herself to me. She came straight at me, her twisted features announcing her murderous intent. As she dug her claws into my thigh, I blazed away straight at her mouth with my gun. It was one of the few occasions in

my career as a trainer when I shot straight at an animal instead of over its head or to one side. A burn results when you "blank" an animal right in the face, and I have no interest in burning my charges. But I was now battling for my life and anything goes at such a time.

I managed to get out of the arena with nothing more serious than a clawed thigh.

Having handled tougher customers and made them obey, I still wasn't convinced that I couldn't make Ethel take her place in the act and behave herself. I had my doubts, of course, but I resolved to give the animal another chance. I couldn't forget that tragic past of hers and all that she had been through. This made me almost suicidally tolerant of her misconduct.

For two days, Ethel behaved beautifully and I was ready to believe she was her old self again, when, on the third day, she leaped for the same tiger again. She knocked the striped cat off its pedestal, and, landing on the seat, clawed at the wooden top in an effort to hold on and keep from falling to the floor below where the tiger waited to spring at her. The pedestal swayed and Ethel, in her frantic effort to keep from toppling over, dug deeper into the wooden top. She righted the swaying perch by a miraculous effort and I reached the scene in time to drive off the tiger that was poised for a leap at his assailant.

That evening Ethel was limping. I didn't take the injury seriously, thinking she had merely bruised her foot. The next morning I noticed that the foot was badly swollen. Unable to step on the injured member, she hobbled around her cage on three feet. With the aid of cage boys, I roped the troublesome lady and dragged her to the bars. Examination revealed that she

had a bad splinter in her foot, the result of clinging so desperately to that pedestal-top. I had the wound lanced and the splinter came out with a good deal of pus. After treating the wound, I ran Ethel into an adjoining cage in the bottom of which I had placed a shallow tank full of a powerful antiseptic. The idea was to make it impossible for her to stand or sit anywhere in her den without bathing her wound. After keeping her in the tank for several hours, I drove her back into the other cage, which was now bedded down with good dry straw. All of my efforts went for naught. The next morning I found Ethel dead in her cage. She had died during the night, of blood-poisoning.

Ethel, it seemed, was definitely born to tragedy. I have never known an animal to have such consistently hard luck.

I had put in more work on this lioness—an ill-fated creature that I was doing my very best to help—than I had on any animal I had ever handled; and all I had to show for my time and effort was . . . a corpse! Other animals on which I had expended one tenth the effort developed into magnificent performers. That is how things go in the animal-training field. One never really knows how an animal is going to turn out.

Of only one thing am I reasonably sure. Seldom do the animals in whom the trainer feels a sentimental interest amount to much as performers. There is something about them that spells danger and disaster. The seeming humanness of these creatures that makes the trainer forget he is dealing with wild animals possessed of a capacity for reverting to jungle type is perhaps responsible.

Wild animals are wild animals always. They can be

trained, but their wildness can never be removed. Our best trainers have lapsed now and then into a sentimental attitude toward a particular animal and more than one has lived to regret it. But I have no regrets over all the work I put in on Ethel. My only regret is that my efforts did not save her. A scientist with whom I later discussed the matter told me she must have been a natural killer, but I still believe that her unfortunate experience as a "first mother" warped her nature and caused all the trouble.

## XII

### *Escapes*

LIONS and tigers quickly become accustomed to cage life, and accept it with a fair degree of equanimity. Thoughts of escape are hardly ever uppermost in their minds. Tigers are more prone than lions to work persistently at the bars of their cages, as if they wanted to break down these barriers. But even tigers, on the rare occasions when they succeed in finding a weak spot, seldom know what to do with freedom if they get it. They are more likely to hide in a dark corner somewhere than they are to make a break for liberty in the country-side.

I have recaptured a number of escaped lions and tigers, in most cases without thrills or incidents, and never in my whole personal experience, with injury to any person. Most of the escapes have taken place in winter quarters, or at times when there was no audience present. Only once has any of my pets given an audience a real scare—and what I went through then, I have no desire to repeat. On another occasion, one of my tigers got loose in a club-hotel filled with sleeping guests, an accident that might have been serious. Once or twice I have had animals break from their cages on the circus lot while the tents were being pitched, with too many spectators and circus hands around to make things quite comfortable.

But for the most part, escapes I've known have meant little more than a crew of men working with a long piece of canvas side wall, which, stretched between them, is moved quietly about until it encircles the spot where the fugitive is hiding. It never occurs to the animal that this wall of canvas is not a solid wall. He accepts it for what it appears to be, a real barricade. A cage is hastily moved into a corner of the inclosed space, where the two ends of the canvas converge. The door of the cage is left invitingly open. Then the trainer enters the inclosure, his revolver in one hand and a stick or chair in the other. Without too much haste he stirs the runaway out of its retreat and works it back to the cage door. One or two blank cartridges will usually suffice to ward off attack, for the animal is too bewildered by the unaccustomed surroundings to fight very enthusiastically. Presently it is back in the cage, the door is closed, and the crew of men quietly fold up the canvas side wall and carry it away.

Perhaps the spookiest of my experiences with escaped animals took place in the Shrine Temple in Detroit. I was to give a private show there for a convention of auto salesmen, and had quartered my cats comfortably in the basement. One large room was filled with supplies, including a wagon-load of sawdust, a battery of water buckets, and a lot of extra pedestals and other equipment. This room was also used as a "pantry," where my men cut up the meat for the lions and tigers. Beyond, in dimly lighted corridors, the cages were ranged along the concrete walls.

The building above was only partly finished at the time. The upper floors that were completed were cut up

into hotel rooms, about half of them occupied. As I remember it, there were one hundred guests sleeping there that night.

A little before midnight, I made the rounds of my pets, and gave a few words of advice to the watchman, an experienced man I had brought with me. For some reason I felt uneasy, but I laid this to the fact that the cellar was still somewhat damp, probably because the concrete was not yet perfectly dry. I went over all the cages again and inspected the bars and fastenings carefully. One of my lions had a slight infection from a scratch on the foot, and seemed a bit restive. I told the watchman to give him a little warm water, and to telephone me at my hotel if the animal didn't quiet down.

I was somehow reluctant to leave. I tried out the telephone, which connected with a switchboard on the main floor of the building. Learning that the board was manned all night, I gave the operator the number of my hotel. While I was talking to him over the phone, I noticed a stairway leading upward from the basement, and idly speculated as to where it went. Evidently, it was just a flight of service stairs leading to the hotel floors above, and to the big swimming-pool, still uncompleted, which was to be an important feature of the building. I envied the hotel guests snoring comfortably in their rooms above; I had been sleeping very irregularly for several nights, and I should get only a few hours to-night, for I must be up early to direct the workmen and carpenters in setting up my arena and constructing the chutes for my animals.

Bidding my watchman a hasty good night, I hurried over to my hotel, the Fort Wayne, for a good sleep.

From a dream about old days in the Chillicothe High

School, I was suddenly awakened by a telephone bell which had a peremptory ring, like a fire-alarm. My watch, lying on the table beside the phone, registered three o'clock as I switched on the light.

It was the night-clerk downstairs. His voice was shrill and excited.

"Hell's broken loose over at the Shrine!" he shouted at me. "Your watchman's here at the desk . . . says your tigers are out . . . all of 'em, I guess!"

I grinned to myself as I quickly pulled on my trousers. There was no more likelihood of my tigers *all* being loose than of the Shrine Temple disappearing into a hole in the ground. Probably just one, I reflected, and not much danger of that one getting any farther than the pantry, where the smell of meat would probably hold him bewitched for a while.

My watchman was waiting for me down at the desk, his face ash-white and his eyes as big as saucers. He was too panicky to be very coherent, but I gathered from a few hasty questions, as I dragged him toward the door, that he had been sitting in his corner of the basement when suddenly Gracie, one of my largest tigers, had bounded past him and rushed off up the service stairs.

The watchman was still so shattered by fear that I left him behind me and raced down the street to the Shrine Temple. In record time I dashed through the door and down the cellar stairs, into the corridor where the cages were lined up. I took a hasty look at Gracie's cage. It was one of my ordinary "shifting dens," consisting of a stout timber frame, with iron bars set firmly into the wood. Gracie had worked one of the bars loose, and then had bent its neighbors enough so that she could squirm through.

I had no revolver and no flash-light. Quickly satisfying myself that the tigress had not stopped in the pantry, I grabbed the watchman's chair. It was a folding camp-chair and not much good in a battle with Gracie, but I couldn't wait to find anything better. Gracie had been upstairs for six or eight minutes, and I shuddered to think of what might have happened in one of those guest-rooms.

I dashed up the service stairs, three steps at a time. Two flights up, a hall door was open, and I saw flickering light at the other end of the long corridor.

"Who's there?" I called.

"Night watchman!" came the answer. It was one of the hotel patrols. I called out again to him, asking him if he had seen anything of a stray tiger. He gave me some befuddled answer. Not waiting to explain further, I hurried back and up another flight of stairs. On each floor I stopped and explored a little way down the corridor, calling Gracie by name. I have never yet seen an escaped animal that would not respond to its name—most often by turning and attacking. But there was no response from Gracie, not even a snarl.

I came to the top floor, the fifth. Here the door from the staircase was ajar. I pushed it wide open, holding my chair in front of me. The light from the electric bulb on the landing showed dimly a huge room, cluttered up with a mass of timbers, scaffolding, bags of mortar, and piles of building material. Only gradually did I begin to figure out that this was the uncompleted swimming-pool, with half-finished partitions and cubicles that eventually would be towel-rooms, shower-baths, locker-rooms, and so on. Altogether it supplied a man-made jungle that offered as many treacherous

hiding-places for a tiger as any tangled forest or swamp that nature ever provided in India or Sumatra.

Although my calls to Gracie brought no response, I was fairly sure the tigress was in this room. I closed the door and bolted it temporarily with a piece of timber across the door-knobs, then went back downstairs, and closed every door, so that when I found Gracie I could drive her down to the cellar without danger to the hotel sleepers.

As I raced back up the stairs to the bolted door of the fifth floor, I breathed a sigh of relief. Things were not so bad as they might have been. It was virtually certain that the tigress had not taken any human victims, unless she had dragged some sleeper to the shelter of the unfinished swimming-pool; and this too was impossible, for she would have left traces of her passing.

I opened the door to the swimming-pool. Within, it was so dark that the little pin-point of light on the landing merely accented the blackness. I'd have felt a bit safer if I could have known exactly what that room looked like, and what was going to be underfoot at my next step forward. If Gracie was here, near the door, she had probably taken refuge under some of that scaffolding on the right. Holding my chair in front of me, I peered into that corner, seeking two little spots of green reflected light, which would be her eyes.

Very slowly I moved forward. Suddenly my ears caught a soft sound just behind me, where I remembered a pile of mortar bags. I wheeled toward the sound. "Gracie!" I called, sharply. She leaped at me with a snarl, almost before I was really sure she was there. Intuitively I stepped aside as I felt, rather than saw, her coming. She lashed out at the legs of my camp-

chair as she swept by, and disappeared beneath a mass of scaffolding.

For several minutes I pushed cautiously around the room, trying to locate her again. I tipped over a keg of nails that went clattering down a slanting pile of floor boards with a din that must have frightened the tigress a good deal more than it did me. I nearly lost my footing in a mess of wet paint. Finally I came to a swinging door that apparently led to a dressing-room or office. Through the glass of the door I could see Gracie's eyes. The tigress had plunged through the door, and couldn't get back, because a piece of two-by-four timber had slipped down and prevented it from moving outward.

I picked up the timber and let the door swing free as I again called Gracie's name, tauntingly. She came out on the run, full of fight. I fended her off toward the hallway, first with the two-by-four and then with my chair. She turned on me half-way across the floor, but as she turned she loosened a few hundred of the spilled nails, which made strange noises right under her feet. She hesitated and I gave her a shove with the timber, toward the door.

In the doorway she made a stand. I was in an awkward position, with a slippery footing of littered tiles and mortar. As she came for me, I realized the time had arrived for stern measures and I swung my two-by-four, with all my strength, down on her head. It took the fight out of her. She reeled backward through the doorway, and immediately I began to force her down the stairs.

Two flights down, she halted on a landing and showed her teeth. As she swung around, her weight

against the door burst it open, and she disappeared into the corridor. This was a mighty dangerous development, and I was after her in a flash. I was only a few feet behind as she turned into the open door of a bedroom. If there was anybody sleeping in there, he was going to have a few exciting moments!

But it happened that the room was unoccupied. I turned on the light with a button by the door, while Gracie retired, snarling, into a corner near the bed. Retreating into the hall, I closed the door behind me. I needed a moment to plan my next move. I could get Gracie out of the room, but how was I going to prevent her bouncing back up to her hide-out on the fifth floor?

She was safely tucked away in that room for a while, so I began the task of lugging down from the swimming-pool floor a miscellaneous assortment of mortar bags, nail kegs, sawhorses, and timbers, to form a barricade across the stairs. Fortunately, I found several broad strips of painters' canvas up there, and these I nailed across the hall, forming a frail cloth wall about ten feet high, blocking the way upward.

Now I must try again to drive Gracie down to the basement. As I entered the lighted bedroom, it was apparent that she had been enjoying a refreshing rest during my absence. She was ready to play, in earnest, now. For several minutes she charged me all over that room. My camp-chair was smashed to splinters, and I replaced it with a red-plush chair that had been standing sedately before a small writing-desk. The tigress quickly finished the chair and I armed myself next with the telephone table. All the time I was watching vigilantly for another chance to use my trusty two-by-four. Finally Gracie gave me an opening and I swung an-

other blow on her skull that made her wince. She didn't like that medicine, and at once backed out into the corridor.

On the landing I approached her with the two-by-four uplifted. She snarled angrily and prepared to spring, but I rushed her before she got under way. To avoid the timber she rose on her hind legs and swung at me with both forepaws. Her aim was so accurate that she knocked the timber from my right hand and the remnants of the telephone table from my left. I was completely disarmed and at her mercy, if she had but known it. But, not realizing her victory, she whirled off down the stairs to the cellar, leaping into her cage and retiring to its farthest corner.

One of the Temple watchmen helped me nail some timbers across the cage opening. Then we sat down together and consumed the contents of his dinner pail—hard-boiled eggs, cheese sandwiches, and cold coffee. I was so hungry that I supplemented the spread with a dollar's worth of food at an all-night arm-chair lunch a few minutes later. For a month afterward, all anybody had to do to annoy Gracie was to wave a two-by-four in front of her cage.

That night's encounter with the tigress was about as tough a battle as I've ever fought with an animal. It was after four o'clock when the watchman and I sat down with his dinner pail; the scrap had lasted approximately an hour, and I was as tired as a Channel swimmer.

There is one other animal escape in my experience that deserves to rank with Gracie's nocturnal adventure. It took place in Cleveland, and came so close to tragedy

that I never think of it without feeling on my forehead a bead or two of reminiscent perspiration.

We were doing good business at the Cleveland Auditorium that week, and on this particular evening the crowd was all that any showman could desire. The arena boxes were filled, and my act went off like clock-work. My animals were in fine fettle, and I myself was feeling in better condition than I had felt in weeks, having enjoyed two or three full nights of refreshing sleep. My equipment had just undergone a thorough overhauling, and the twelve armed men who stood outside the arena in military uniform during my performance were wearing new polished steel helmets, which looked very smart and soldierly, even if the "soldiers" themselves were merely part of the stage setting.

I completed the final flourish of my act, and the band blared forth in an overwhelming chord in G, which the animals instantly recognize as the signal for their return to their cages. Sixteen tigers rushed for the gate which led through a long wooden chute to the big room back of the arena boxes, where their wagons were waiting to receive them.

There was not the slightest premonition of any impending disaster. Three, four, five tigers poured into the chute. Then there was an odd pause, just for a moment, which flashed a sudden alarm to my brain. I looked down along the chute, which is constructed by local carpenters at each town where we exhibit, from specifications provided by me to fit the arrangement of the arena and the storage-place for the cages. Half-way down the chute there was a safety-door, arranged to swing so that it would close against any animals that might try to turn back toward the arena.

The trouble, I divined instantly, was with this safety-door. My tigers continued to pile into the chute, but it was like jamming into a New York subway train during the rush hour.

"The door swings the wrong way!" shouted a perspiring attendant who was standing alongside the chute. "It's jammed tight shut!"

I leaped to my gate and around the arena to the chute. Sixteen tigers were trying to force themselves into six feet of space, and the wooden chute was rocking like a small boat in a heavy sea. I grabbed a pole, and working it through the arena bars, tried to prod the animals back into the arena. Two or three attendants followed my example, but we accomplished nothing.

Then there was a sudden cracking of timber, and the top of the chute rose straight into the air, exactly like the lid of a big box. Through the opening three angry tigers leaped to freedom.

Once again Hauser, the equestrian director, came to my aid. He is an all-round circus man who instinctively knows what to do in any emergency. Realizing that I was going to have my hands full with the escaping animals, he leaped to the top of the chute and jammed the broken top down in an effort to keep any others from getting out. The breaking of the timbers had loosened the door so that it fell open, enabling the rest of the tigers to push on to their proper destination.

Meanwhile I was using my whip and gun to keep the three escaped animals intent upon me, rather than upon the audience. They must feel that I was their immediate enemy. Their attention must somehow be concentrated on me.

At the same time, out of the corner of my eye, I planned the path by which I hoped to drive them back to the annex, where their cages awaited them. Between them and the annex was an arena box, in which six ladies in evening gowns sat, their faces distorted with terror. I watched until somebody hustled the ladies out of the box, and meanwhile I called to some animal-men in the rear to clear the giraffe inclosure, which I could see in the background, so that the tigers could be rounded up in it.

It is marvelous how fast things can happen in emergencies. It was only a few seconds before I saw that the giraffes had been driven into their wagon, so that the big wire inclosure where they had been standing was empty. Motioning to the animal-men to open it on the side toward me, I cued my three angry cats backward suddenly, so that they would be driven straight into the opening.

Two of the tigers responded beautifully. They made a grand leap straight over the arena box where the six ladies had been sitting, and were promptly corraled in the giraffe's wire barricade, whence it would be a comparatively simple matter to transfer them to their cages.

But my third trouble-maker declined to be so easily corraled. This was Snip, and Snip was a big handful at any time. She had always hated me, with a bitterness that now was the best possible guarantee of the safety of that frenzied audience. I was sure she would attack me in preference to any stranger—provided I could keep her attention.

Suddenly she turned on me, but I deflected her first

charge, with a blank cartridge fired just above her head. She fell back and made a quick circle of the sawdust ring. I kept taunting her, calling her name and trying to get her to charge me again. The greatest danger now was that the pandemonium which had broken loose in the audience would divert her mind from me. If this happened, there would be trouble so serious that I didn't dare think of it.

I grabbed a whip and cracked it in short, sharp staccato snaps which penetrated even the screaming, screeching tumult of the panic-stricken audience. Snip accepted my challenge, preparing herself for a heavy spring. Here was an opportunity such as she had never had before, for inside the comparatively narrow confines of the steel arena she had only thirty-two feet in which to maneuver. Now she had a freedom of movement more like what would have been possible in her native jungle. She could get a running start at me; and when she leaped, there would be an accuracy and momentum behind her that would spell disaster for her human target.

I had accomplished one thing, however. Snip was so intent on getting me that she had forgotten all about the milling audience. Even the circus folk right around the ring, who had taken refuge in the overhead ropes and were swinging there like monkeys, failed to divert her attention. Out of the corner of my eye, I had seen my twelve tin-hatted "soldiers" throw down their unloaded rifles and rush pell-mell to safety. I stumbled over one of their tin hats as I shifted quickly to the right to deflect in the direction of the cage room Snip's oncoming rush.

I took the charge, dodging quickly, and gave Snip

two more bewildering blank cartridges as she catapulted past me through the air. She landed, wheeled, and was after me again. Now I felt more confident. The danger to the audience was past, provided I could keep her anger focused on me. The only possible mischance, I felt, would be for some idiot to blunder into the arena and actually come between me and my enemy. Every move I made now was designed to pull Snip over, step by charging step, toward the cages. The intervening box was clear. Already some of my quick-witted assistants were bringing a canvas wall into a position where it would act as a funnel out of the ring. Two or three more of those wheeling charges and I'd have Snip at the mouth of the funnel.

Carefully I forced the frenzied tigress backward toward that canvas funnel. Two more charges and she was almost there. I moved four or five steps to the right, to draw her over exactly in front of the opening. As soon as she was where I wanted her, I moved forward, thrusting my kitchen chair toward her and making her retreat. I had her, now, exactly in line. Safety was in sight.

Then, suddenly, I saw something. Just beyond Snip, in line with the funnel mouth, an old circus hand we called Dad Mitchell was standing. Somehow he had been trapped there, unable to join his companions in their flight to the ropes overhead. Almost at the instant I saw him, Snip wheeled so that old Dad was directly in her path. His first instinct, of course, was to flee. I saw him jerk, as if about to run.

"Don't move, Dad!" I shouted. "Don't move a muscle; she'll chop you down if you run!"

It took all the will-power he had to obey me, even

## THE BIG CAGE

though he knew, as I did, that a big cat will go for anything that flees. Dad stood absolutely immovable, like a statue, while I won back Snip's attention, and forced her to attack me again. This time I gave ground to her, lots of it, drawing her far enough to enable old Dad to edge over to the canvas wall and step out of sight. Then I began the backing-up process again, and in a few minutes turned her down the funnel and into the cage runways.

I did not go back into the auditorium that evening. After carefully inspecting all the cages, I took off my clothes and lay down, completely exhausted, on my rubbing table. Every muscle in my body ached and my legs and back were as lame as if I had been flogged. This was probably due to the tremendous strain I had put on various muscles in my battle with Snip. Handling an animal outside the arena is at least three times as difficult and dangerous as it is inside the big cage.

Not until the next day, when I felt somewhat relaxed, did I pay any attention to reports from the auditorium. The newspapers carried lurid accounts of the incident. Some of the circus ushers added details that seemed amusing enough now that the strain was past. Several women in the audience had fainted. One of them was carried out by two men and dumped into a telephone booth, where she was left to recover consciousness as best she could, while her escorts disappeared. A dozen circus hands ran out of the auditorium and down the street, one of them dressed in clown's clothing to imitate a giant nursing bottle. Five small boys climbed a pillar to the overhead beams, and then were too frightened to climb down again, so that attendants had to fetch long ladders to extricate them.

Every one of the arena boxes was emptied within a few moments after the escape, and a large collection of men's overcoats and top-hats and ladies' evening wraps was left behind. Many of the articles were not claimed by their owners until the next day. One woman left her purse, containing three thousand dollars worth of diamonds, on her chair, and forgot all about it until two days later. Another sued the circus for damages, because of a nervous breakdown she suffered after that night, but her suit was later withdrawn.

A much less thrilling escape, but one that was rather exceptional because of the surroundings in which it occurred, took place one day on the docks, where I had gone to assume charge of three tigers just arriving from abroad. There was a big cargo of animals on board the incoming steamer, consigned to various zoos, circuses, and dealers. When I arrived, the unloading had already begun, and the dock was crowded with packing-cases containing all sorts of live cargo.

The biggest noise came from forty or fifty cases of small Indian rhesus monkeys, which are incessant chatters. They were shipped twenty-five in a case, with the top of each case slatted to allow them sufficient air. Inside their cases they were scrambling about in great excitement.

There were several individual animals already unloaded, which I looked over with professional interest. For instance, there was a black leopard, as large and fine a specimen as I had ever seen. It was consigned to a dealer who was on the dock. He had a stick in his hand, with which he pushed back the leopard's lips to be sure the teeth were in prime condition. The leopard re-

sented this bitterly, snapping the heavy stick in two as if it had been a paper match. There were also four or five fine tigers, and two tapirs that looked seasick.

Owing to the nature of the cargo, the public was barred from the dock. A burly policeman, with a fine Irish brogue, had let me by only after I had explained in some detail who I was and why I was there. Two sailors on the dock looked too professional to be dismissed by the cop, although they evidently didn't belong and were just loafing around to see what was happening. They climbed up on a big packing-case to get a better view, but departed from their vantage-point with great celerity when a snarl from below informed them that the case contained a mean-minded tiger.

At the end of the pier there was a small booth, in which an elderly clerk was checking the cargo as it came over the boat's edge under the guidance of a half-naked Lascar who operated the hoisting apparatus. I approached the clerk's booth and inquired whether my tigers had been taken off yet. He looked over the list and shook his head. "There's three more coming over now," he said, pointing up at the ship's deck. "Prob'bly them's yours."

I watched a big crate being lifted and lowered. I didn't think much of the way that Lascar winchman handled his job. He was plumb careless, in my private opinion. He let the cable run through the winch regardless of whether the crate hit the ship's side or bumped on the dock. An animal cage should be handled as delicately as Bohemian glassware, for it doesn't do animals or cages any good to be banged about.

However, the crate landed all right, and two long-shoremen gingerly wheeled it over to one side. I looked

at the label. The crate was mine, and the animal inside was a fine one, so far as I could judge in the darkness behind the slats.

Another crate came over. Something was wrong with the sling, and the cage nearly fell out in mid-air. I shouted angrily at the Lascar, who paid no attention. I shouted again, using strong language. This time he seemed to understand, for he shook his fist at me.

Well, here was the third and last of my tigers. The winchman was sneering at me as he handled this one, as if to say, "You'll try to tell me my business, will you?" He hoisted it off the deck with a jerk that would annoy the best-behaved animal in the world. It certainly made the occupant of the cage angry, for the tiger let out a series of shrill protests that scared even the winchman. In his fright, he dropped the big crate more quickly than he had lifted it. It struck the dock with a splintering crash, and a second later the tiger burst out, scattering fragments of wood all over the place. Some of the flying pieces knocked open two monkey cages, and fifty monkeys erupted onto the dock, flying with a wild jabbering in every direction.

"Tiger loose!" somebody yelled, and there was a general scattering of longshoremen and spectators. Probably there were no more than thirty people on the dock, but in the wild disorder that ensued, they seemed more like a thousand.

The tiger made a short rush diagonally across the dock, then stopped and turned, dashing in another direction. He was confused by all the screaming and shouting. It seemed as if scrambling men and monkeys were everywhere.

When he broke loose, I had been standing close to the

checking clerk's booth. There was a tall four-legged stool inside, and I reached in and took it in my left hand. In my right I got a fragment of crate wood, about the size of a shingle. I struck the wood sharply against the stool, over and over again, to get the tiger's attention.

My animal had finally stopped in the middle of an open space bounded on one hand by the high black side of the steamer, and on the other by a pile of bales. Several stevedores were perched up on top of the bales, and the tiger was apparently considering the desirability of going up after them. Chattering monkeys were warning the sailors of the danger they were in up there.

The tiger saw me and accepted my challenge. He charged straight into the chair, and I drew him over toward the checker's booth. Foiled in his first charge, he tried again, and this time I drew him almost opposite the booth. I looked over my shoulder and was surprised to find that the clerk had somehow crawled back into his booth.

"Get out of that box!" I ordered him. "I'm going to put this tiger in there!"

He scrambled out, somehow, while I kept the tiger engaged. The animal whirled quickly as the disappearing clerk caught his eye, but I was on top of him before he could start in pursuit. I drove him back a few feet, then let him advance on me until he was exactly opposite the door of the booth. Now I drove the four-legged stool straight into his face, and he backed precipitately into the booth. I had the door slammed shut before he knew what was happening.

Although there was a tremendous commotion inside the booth, and an occasional paw was thrust through

the little window, I signaled the stevedores and spectators down from their perches, and armed them all with stout poles from a pile of timber at the far end of the wharf. I invited the policeman to join us, but he had urgent business elsewhere. "Any time something like that's loose, it's not on my beat!" he assured me.

While the pole brigade encircled the checker's booth, I got hold of the ship's carpenter, and had him repair the smashed crate. We wrapped a lot of stout rope around it for good measure, and then I was ready to transfer the tiger from the booth to the crate. Stevedores carried the crate up to the door of the booth, and I placed the open end close against the door. As I was about to open the door and shove the tiger through it, the checker came running up.

"Say," he demanded blusteringly, pointing to his booth, "who said you could put that tiger in there?"

"Who said he couldn't?" one of the stevedores asked him, with a significant wink.

Five minutes later my three crates were on a truck, speeding out to the railroad yards, where a freight-car was waiting to take them to the winter quarters in Indiana.

When I think of the countless miles of railroad travel that I've done up and down the country with my animals, over a period of years, it seems rather remarkable that I have had to deal with only two escapes on railroad trains. One of these took place on a journey across Ohio and Michigan for a series of post-season winter dates with part of my act.

The animals were in a baggage-car with two attendants. Eight other circus employees, including myself,

were traveling in a Pullman just behind the baggage-car. I was sitting in a front section, having a friendly chat with the conductor, when the train suddenly stopped with a jerk that almost threw me out of my seat. Some of my fellow-passengers fared worse than I did. Two of them landed in a heap in the aisle and the conductor, an old-timer who should have been an accomplished equilibrist, joined them on the floor. I ran to the vestibule, opened the door, and stuck my head out to see what was the matter. My two cage boys had just leaped out of the baggage-car door, and were running up the track toward me.

"Pep is loose!" one of them shouted, a look of terror in his eyes. "I pulled the safety-valve—"

I didn't wait to hear any more. I jumped to the track and hurried to the open door of the baggage-car. The conductor, who had come up behind me as I stood in the vestibule, followed at some distance behind.

As I reached the baggage-car door, expecting to see a tiger come bounding out, I was almost bowled over by a stream of ragged-looking men that poured forth from the car exactly as the characters sometimes do in a motion-picture comedy. Hitting the road-bed, they started running—some of them had to pick themselves up first—as though pursued by an army of demons.

Where on earth they all came from was a mystery, both to me and to the conductor, because we had supposed there was nobody in that car but my two cage boys. Of course I didn't spend much time trying to figure it out. I had something else to think about.

I swung up the side of the car, entered, and looked around. My two cage boys followed me. The conductor kept well clear of the car door, and waved back im-

periously a group of passengers who had started to walk down the track to investigate. He had one eye on the car door and the other on his watch, which he was holding nervously in his hand.

Strangely enough, the tiger, having got out of his cage, had not availed himself of the opportunity to escape into the open, although perhaps this is not so miraculous as it seems. An animal in brand-new surroundings is always at a disadvantage, and my escaped tiger, crouched in a corner, had every reason in the world to be puzzled and bewildered by the meaningless picture that greeted him as he landed, free, in the aisle between the row of cages and the opposite wall of the car. This was entirely foreign territory to him, territory that meant nothing and might be full of unseen dangers; therefore it wasn't a bad idea to hang back and await developments.

A glance at the open cage assured me the tiger was really Pep; for I knew the position of each animal. Pep was not one of my toughest customers. While I wouldn't exactly call him lacking in tigerish qualities, he was hardly in a class with post-graduate devils like Rajah or Theba. If I had had either of these two to deal with in this situation I should have had a lot more to think about. Loose in a small inclosure, Rajah or Theba would have presented a problem requiring a different and more elaborate plan of recapture. Pep was not quite so full of cussedness. But, at that, I had plenty to think about.

The first move was to close the door of the baggage-car, so that Pep would not take it into his head to make a sudden leap for the open after having overlooked the idea for two or three precious minutes.

Apparently the conductor considered the closing of the door a signal to go ahead, for the next moment I felt the car moving. This didn't suit me at all. I prefer an absolutely sure footing when I am dealing with a big cat at close range. So I shouted to one of the cage boys to pull the valve again, thereby stopping the train after it had moved no more than thirty feet.

Then I opened the car door a narrow crack and yelled to the conductor, explaining that I wanted the train held a few minutes longer, until I got my fugitive caged.

"Be as quick as you can," he called back at me, in a worried tone. I wondered why he wasn't occupying his time trying to recapture all those shabbily dressed passengers who had escaped a few moments before from the baggage-car, and had quickly disappeared in the woods beyond the tracks.

Closing the door again, I turned my attention to Pep, still hiding in the semi-darkness at the forward end of the car. I directed the two cage boys to gather up a lot of props that were stored at the other end of the car, and build with them an inclosure that would take in Pep's cage and the space beyond, where he was skulking. I stood on guard while they worked, armed with a chair and a short whip. Pep growled and snarled as he watched the boys, but made no move against them.

Next I ordered one of the boys to climb on top of the banked-up cages and slowly move along until he was crouched on Pep's cage. I passed up to him the "front" of the cage—a solid wooden slab that slips into grooves outside the cage bars, and is used to cover them at night, so that the animals may not be disturbed by moving lights and shadows. It also serves to keep the cage

warmer in winter. Sufficient allowance is made for air to enter around the edges of the cover.

The other boy, meanwhile, had removed the loosened bars through which Pep had escaped, leaving an ample opening for him to get back in. My plan was to drive the animal into the opening and have the boy above quickly slide the front into its grooves, thus effectually closing up the cage again.

There was some danger to the boy in this maneuver, for Pep might take it into his head to leap clear to the top of the cages, instead of merely going into his own particular cubby-hole. So I warned the boy to hold the front so that it would act as a shield in case the tiger elected to lunge at him.

But Pep had no such plans. When I poked him out of his corner, he had no eyes for any one but me. He came straight at me, in a single swift leap through the air. I stopped him with my chair, and then prodded him back into his corner. Twice more he came at me, repeating his maneuver in exactly the same style, as if his chief interest lay in finding out whether I could be made to give ground. It would not do for me to weaken now.

After the third time he gave up and let me drive him straight under the door of his cage. He started to leap in, then thought better of it and whirled back in a snarling, vicious circling movement which I promptly broke up with chair and whip. With a last snap at me, which broke two legs off my chair, he resigned himself to captivity again, and in the twinkling of an eye was back behind the closed front.

I opened the car door and signaled to the conductor to go ahead. Then I sat down in the door and examined

the iron bars that had been removed from Pep's cage. He had done a remarkable job, and one that I should not have believed possible, for this was a new cage, specially constructed, with iron bars sunk deeply into the framework and reinforced all along the outside edges. It was evident that Pep had been working at these bars ever since we started out the night before. He had worked three of them out by the roots, and had bent two others about four inches out of true.

Pep has always had some peculiar habits—peculiar even for a tiger. He keeps his paws going constantly along the bars, and each time he presses one of them he puts his whole four hundred pounds of muscle behind the push. For that reason, it has always been my practice to renew his cages frequently, to inspect the bars hourly, and to use the sturdiest metalwork that can be devised.

At the first stop, I left the baggage-car and went back to placate the conductor, who I felt would be very much annoyed at the delay I had caused. He was worried, all right, and even angry, but not about the delay. The thing that had aroused his ire, I found, was the line of nondescripts that had spouted forth from my animal-car and disappeared in the woods. He was convinced that they were friends of mine, whom I was trying to transport without cost.

"And if it hadn't been for that tiger getting loose," he insisted acidly, "you'd have got away with it. As it is, you'll have to pay their fare for the distance they traveled."

I had made some inquiries of my cage boys, and had learned that the hidden passengers were unemployed

circus hands, who had stolen a ride northward in hopes of finding some employment at the other end of our journey. They had been posted along the tops of the cages by my boys, whose sympathies were naturally with these old friends.

I assured the conductor that his hidden passengers were no friends of mine, and that they had secreted themselves in the car without my knowledge.

"You'll have to pay for them, all the same," he repeated doggedly.

"But how can I pay," I asked, "if we don't know how many there were?"

That stumped the conductor for a moment. "I think there were about twenty of them," he said, a little doubtfully.

"Pish!" I retorted, with a broad grin. "You must have been excited; I only remember five . . . or mebbe it was four," I added reflectively. Actually, I think there were nine or ten.

"There were twenty," he insisted weakly.

"No matter how many there were," I said, trying a new tack, "I won't pay for them. Your railroad has no right to permit a lot of tramps to get aboard my car. Probably they loosed that tiger, just out of meanness."

This irritated the conductor. "Say," he blustered, "what kind of a game is this you're working?" Then he stamped off down the car, mumbling, "And me thinking all the time you were okay!" I suppose he was referring to the several pleasant conversations we had had. And now he had found me out!

Presently he came back and renewed his attack. He was really more trouble than Pep. He showed me my

ticket. "This allows you to ride only two men in that animal-car," he said, "and eight in this Pullman. You'll have to pay for those others, I tell you!"

"Have you decided how many there were?" I inquired politely.

"It's up to you to find out, not me," he replied. "They were in your car."

"But on your train," I suggested. "Maybe it *is* up to you."

I finally succeeded in convincing him that I wasn't going to pay for my uninvited guests. He could take it up with the circus management if he wanted to, but it was none of my business.

After a while, I went back to the baggage-car and cussed out the two cage boys, just to ease my conscience. Of course they had no right to take on a lot of extra passengers, but their motives were good. Circus people stick together in pretty clannish fashion, and I liked my boys for trying to help out these members of the army of the unemployed.

Another railroad experience, in which an escaped tiger figured, took place in 1925. This one had a little less comedy and a little more tragedy, resulting in the loss of Dora Donk, a circus mule that had been a favorite of employees and audiences for many years. Dora, though just a mule, was a very lovable pet with a repertoire of donkey tricks that endeared her to everybody.

We were in the railroad yards at West Baden, Indiana, preparing to leave for the West. I had about twenty lions and tigers loaded, not in a regular baggage-car, but in one of those long, commodious circus stock-cars. In addition to the cats, this car accommodated

three or four camels, the performing mule, and a good deal of miscellaneous equipment.

Monarch was the tiger that broke loose on this occasion. Monarch had a strong aversion to mules in general, and to Dora Donk in particular. Scores of times he had indicated his dislike for the performing mule, and the latter understood Monarch's language well enough to keep as far away as possible on all occasions. Dora Donk was a great lover of practical jokes, such as giving her heel to careless circus hands, or taking a gentle nip out of the pant leg of unwary roustabouts. But she tried none of her donkey-shines on Monarch.

Dora Donk, for this trip, had unfortunately been tied up at a spot in the car where Monarch could see her, and the mere sight of her annoyed the tiger exceedingly. However, his snarls and roars did nobody any harm, and the watchman on duty was no more than mildly interested, and perhaps a little amused that a mighty tiger should let a mere mule agitate him so.

Monarch's mind was set, however, on doing something about the matter. Unbeknownst to anybody, he worked steadily away at the bars of his cage, until, after several hours, he contrived an opening large enough to squeeze through. The watchman, sitting placidly at the other end of the car with a newspaper, glanced up from the statistics of the sixth race at Pimlico, to see a striped body slipping out of a cage. He didn't wait to see more. He dropped his paper and rushed out of the car, closing the heavy swinging door behind him as he fled in terror. A moment later he had found me and given me the news.

It would have been foolish for me to enter the car and try to capture the fugitive as I recovered Pep. We

were carrying so much stuff in the animal-car on this occasion that I should have had very little room for any effective footwork. The physical layout of the car necessitated an entirely different approach to my problem.

Through a window at one end of the car I could see Monarch tearing at the mule's throat. I was too late to do anything for poor Dora Donk. Down went the mule in a heap, while near by the terrified camels strained at their fastenings and made a terrific commotion.

It was evident that Monarch had deliberately selected Dora for his victim, because he had to pass the camels in order to reach her. But the camels were giving such an exhibition of terror that I was quite sure the tiger would turn on them presently. I must work fast to save them.

I looked the car over carefully, and felt it would be impossible to get Monarch back in his cage by any ordinary means, without most certainly sacrificing the camels. So I decided to cut a hole in the side of the car. With a shout I summoned two circus carpenters who happened to be at hand. In a trice I had them at work with chisels and saws. I indicated the point where I wanted a section about three and a half feet square removed. They are fast workers, these circus carpenters, and they had their job nearly done by the time I had gathered a squad of animal-men to bring a shifting den, which we placed on jacks, elevating it to the height of the square opening, and braced securely in position. The den was now flush against the side of the car, exactly covering the opening. It was held in place by seven or eight huskies.

Now it was up to me to enter the car by the end door

and drive Monarch into the heavy box. I armed myself with a short-handled pitchfork, for I realized that I couldn't manipulate a chair effectively at such close quarters. I also had a blank-cartridge pistol in my holster, but I didn't mean to use it except in case of dire necessity: the interior of a car is no place for a shooting, even with blanks.

The plaintive cries of the camels—I really don't know how to describe them, but camels are particularly vocal in times of danger—increased in volume as I opened the door and let myself into the car. The sight I witnessed was a bloody one and I will spare the reader a description of the mangled remains of Dora Donk.

Monarch looked up from his feast as I appeared upon the scene, his face covered with blood. You know how an ordinary dog or cat acts when somebody tries to interfere with his meal. Tigers are just the same, only worse. Monarch regarded my intrusion as a deliberate effort to steal his dinner, and he dropped his victim to deal with me. From half-way down the car, he came lunging at me. I kept the three-pointed pitchfork in front of me, as I side-stepped his charge. He swung around for another try at me, but I had him at a disadvantage now, in an awkward corner, and I pressed him hard. In any walled inclosure of comparatively small dimensions a big cat has difficulty in maneuvering. Monarch slipped and skidded into the side of the car as he was forced to turn.

A few prods of the pitchfork persuaded him to turn in the direction of the square opening which the carpenters had made. He was almost in it before he saw through my ruse, but now he veered away from the car

wall with a vicious snarl. He wheeled at me as if he had been standing on a turn-table. But I had expected this move and I gave him a straight dose of pitchfork. He somersaulted backward, and rolled like a furry ball into the shifting den, hitting the further end so hard that it took all the strength of the men who were holding it to keep it from careening off the jacks.

Five minutes later, Monarch was back in his own cage. Circus hands removed the remains of his victim and sprinkled the floor with sawdust. The camels, still trembling from their fright, were removed to another car, where they could get a good night's rest. Monarch, thoroughly tired out, lay down and slept. The watchman rearranged his chair and recovered his newspaper. As we pulled out of the yards, he was once more busy with his stubby pencil, figuring out his selections for the next day's races.

The death of Dora Donk affected everybody in the circus. She had been, it seemed, everybody's friend. Even in her practical jokes, said the circus hands, she had been gentle. I heard some of them explaining that she kicked them "playfully" and bit them "friendly like."

The early history of animal-training, in the days of the old circuses, was dotted with escapes. Modern improvements in cage-making and transportation methods have reduced the number of such accidents to a minimum. But even in the best cage that can be built, a determined tiger, working away at his bars for many long hours, has a good chance of loosening them, no matter how strong the framework may be. The way to prevent escapes is to have regular and frequent cage-inspections.

## XIII

### *The Animal Question*

IN A fight between a full-grown lion and a full-grown tiger, I'd be inclined to bet on the lion, largely because he has certain physical advantages. His mane, for instance, protects his throat; the tiger has no such protection. The average lion, also, is a little bigger and heavier than the average tiger. My statement might suggest that I am depreciating the striped cat's speed and terrific ferocity, a savagery which in a fight borders on the diabolical, but it is by no means my intention to do so. I wouldn't do much frenzied betting on a fight between a lion and a tiger of the same age and weight: that would be foolish.

In saying this I am trying to answer the question that has been asked me most frequently since I first embarked upon my career as a trainer of wild animals: "Can a lion lick a tiger in a fight or vice versa?"

I'm afraid that oft-repeated question, like a few others which circus fans put up to me, can never be completely and categorically answered. Since lions and tigers come from different parts of the world, there is no chance of deciding it in the natural habitat of either beast. And the scraps that take place in captivity do not furnish an accurate gage. For they are usually characterized by circumstances that give one side or the other the advantage—this advantage generally being

on the side of the lions, owing to their incurable tendency to gang up against any foe.

I have had a good many opportunities to observe this ganging characteristic of lions. On a recent evening, for instance, I was about to start putting my lions and tigers through their paces for the benefit of one of the biggest crowds of the year. I was working forty cats at the time—twenty-four lions and sixteen tigers. Rogue, a big tiger, had taken his accustomed perch on the highest pedestal in the arena, eleven feet above the floor-level. Prince, one of the heftiest lions in the show and a bad actor, suddenly took it into his head to cause trouble. Without warning he made a tremendous leap and, just managing to sink in his claws, dragged the tiger down from his roost. Had the striped cat expected the attack he could have braced himself and stayed put; but the suddenness of the assault was too much for him and he lost his balance. The two animals had hardly struck the floor when Cæsar ran over to join the scrap and help his brother Prince win a lion victory. Rogue fought himself clear of his two assailants and backed up against the iron bars of the big cage. It was a clever move, for it meant that he would not have to worry about an attack from behind. At least his back was protected and that was something.

Then followed a sort of animal boxing-match. Roaring their murderous intent, the lions closed in on the tiger, but they were temporarily frustrated in their efforts to inflict real damage. Rogue gave them a boxing lesson, slashing away so effectively with his paws that it was impossible for either Prince or Cæsar to get set for one of those deadly bites at the throat that are always the main objective in such a tussle.

No more than a few seconds elapsed before Brutus, another lion, joined in the scrap. And now the struggle was more one-sided than ever. Three lions against one tiger!

Having lost many tigers through the ganging up of lions, I knew I was up against something pretty serious. But there is nothing that can be done in the early moments of such a battle. The combatants lose their heads and go temporarily mad. So I waited, watching not only the fighters but also the other animals, all of them nervously alert, with a realization of what was going on but unable to decide whether to take part in the scrimmage. Meanwhile the vast audience was getting a thrill, but most people naturally thought it was all part of the regular act.

Rogue seemed undaunted by the arrival of his third adversary. He was lashing out in all directions so fast that it was difficult for the eye to follow the lightning-like movements of his paws. And thus he managed to keep his attackers away until I succeeded in getting the lions to fight me instead of him. This I did by poking them with a heavy stick, repeating my pokes in rapid-fire fashion until they could no longer ignore me. Then, when they came at me, I blanked them with my gun. The idea of the blank cartridge, of course, is to startle the beasts and get their minds on something else. Only in rare cases, where the situation is desperate, is it necessary to blank an animal smack in the face. Almost always, as I have made clear, I level the gun so that the fire goes over the animal's head or to one side.

On this particular occasion, the three lions were perfectly willing to call it a day. Their fight with Rogue had not been very satisfactory. So when I came along

with my stick and gave them an excuse to quit, they seemed glad enough to take advantage of it. Their subsequent efforts to fight me were not very whole-hearted or convincing.

Although I'd be inclined to favor the lion in a finish fight, I could cite many instances of a single tiger fighting off a group of lions. In fact, my Sumatra tiger Chester once fought off seven lions before a crowd at Collinsville, Pennsylvania, and emerged from the scrap little the worse for wear. Chester has been in my act for five years and is still going strong, veteran of many battles.

I'll have to admit that it is seldom a tiger can hold his own very long in a struggle with several lions that have ganged up, but I've seen it happen often enough, in the years I've been mixing the two species of cats in the ring, to feel that I can fairly cite these cases in proof of the prowess of the tiger as a fighter.

On the other hand, I could bring up a certain amount of pretty convincing evidence on the lion's side of the controversy. Even while I am writing this, one of my favorite tigers, Princess, is dying in consequence of a brief encounter with the maned enemy. And Princess is only one of a half-dozen striped cats that I have lost in the same way since I started my present act. So there are two sides to the lion-tiger business about which the circus fans inquire so persistently.

The conduct of Sultan (my big lion whom you've already met) during the photographing of the screen adaptation of this book did a lot to make me feel that perhaps lions are better fighters than tigers. Sultan was

in a scrappy mood—perhaps disliking the rôle of movie actor—and one by one took on and whipped every tiger in my act. It was an amazing performance, but, I admit, not a typical one. Although I have given my own opinion, the question of lion-tiger superiority is pretty much of a toss-up.

A question that I hear almost as often as the lion-tiger one is: "What is the most dangerous part of your act?" There is no need for hesitation in replying that the first minute, when the animals are all on the floor of the ring, offers the most hazards. Not until I get the performers up on their pedestals can I breathe easily. In the general mix-up that precedes pedestalizing, the males have their minds on the females; also the more troublesome of my lions can't quite resist their impulse to gang up against the tigers that follow them into the ring.

An experience I had at Texarkana, Arkansas, illustrates what I say about the perils of the opening moments of an act. I was standing in the safety-cage trying to get the attention of Bredo, one-time arena boss and a first-rate performer, with the purpose of making him scamper up his appointed pedestal. Bredo was not his usual attentive self. He kept staring at another lion that I had not yet permitted to enter the ring. This animal—a cat with a bad record—was standing in the tunnel by means of which the beasts file into the arena, roaring angrily at the grated door that separated him from the stage. As his roaring increased in volume, he secured Bredo's concentrated attention and it began to look as if this preoccupation might delay my act. So I

decided to enter the arena and make Bredo put his mind on his work. I fired my blank-cartridge pistol to announce that I was coming, and in I went.

The shot failed to shake Bredo out of his reverie. He stood staring at the roaring lion in the tunnel. I ordered the trouble-maker removed, then touched Bredo lightly with my whip, and got a much quicker response than I expected or wanted. The big fellow wheeled around and made a leap. The suddenness of his attack was too much for me. He knocked me down and without wasting any time dug into my right side, about waist-high, with his teeth. The heavy, wide belt that I wear probably saved my life. While Bredo managed to scrape my side, what he gripped mainly was a mouthful of belt and trousers.

Without changing his grip, he started dragging me around the ring, making a complete circuit as the audience thundered its applause. The crowd could see that the animal had me by the belt and they thought the whole thing was staged. Little did they know how scared I was!

The first lap finished, Bredo loosened his grip for a moment, and, standing over me, was about to grab me again, when his favorite lioness—a lady in whose charms he had manifested considerable interest in the past—came trotting over and proceeded to rub her face against his. Bredo immediately lost interest in me. He moved a foot or two away and devoted himself to the lady.

“Rattle the door!” I yelled to the attendant posted at the tunnel. “Rattle it! Rattle it!” I wanted him to get the attention of the feline love-birds, and do it quickly. I was in an awkward spot and I saw no sense in accept-

ing what might prove a very temporary respite. The boy responded and the tune he played on the iron gate startled the two animals into a retreat toward the tunnel, where the attendant opened the door and let the pair out. I finished the act without them.

For the second time in my career I had escaped with a fairly whole skin as a result of an inter-arena love-affair. My injuries were trivial. My right hand had struck against something as I was dragged around the ring, but none of my bruises amounted to much. Neither did the scratches on my side.

That night I was seated in a restaurant when I was recognized by some people who had seen Bredo take me for a ride. They came over to congratulate me on my performance.

"It's a swell act," one member of the party, a dapper young man, remarked. "I liked best the part where the lion drags you around the ring by the belt. How did you ever train him to do that?"

Laughing, I replied: "That was an accident. The lion was trying to get me. He barely missed chewing up my side. The belt saved me."

"That's a hot one!" chuckled the young man.

"Some kidder!" one of his companions chimed in.

I simply couldn't convince those people that I hadn't staged that stunt with Bredo, so I shrugged my shoulders and let 'em have it their own way. Whereupon they pressed me again to tell them how I had taught the animal to perform so unusual a trick. I fought them off by insisting that it was a secret I couldn't disclose, for it might reach other animal-trainers and they would start stealing my stuff.

One of the local newspaper men, reviewing that

night's show, gave warm praise to what he called "the drag stunt," but suggested that it ought to come at the end of the act, as it would make a "superb climax." I felt like telling him that the climax of my act very often comes in the opening minute, and that I never feel quite comfortable until the first sixty seconds have passed.

Another question that the curious often ask me is this: "Which are easier to train—male or female animals?" Almost without exception the females present an easier problem. They are more responsive—and not because they are smarter, either. The males are die-hards, unwilling to submit to the training routine until they are convinced there is no way out of it. The females are more resigned, give in more quickly. I have taken a lioness fresh from Africa and in two weeks had her letter-perfect in the fundamentals—another way of saying that I was able to put her anywhere in the arena. She responded to all the basic commands, hopping up and down her pedestal and moving to any point in the arena I indicated. I have never been able to accomplish that much with a male in so short a time.

In the early stages of training, males—both lions and tigers—invariably put up an argument before they decide to obey a command. They understand what I want them to do, but they don't like being bossed, and won't be until they learn that there's no use in rebelling. They feel me out as much as I feel them out, refusing to acknowledge my leadership until I've made it plain that their growling and snarling doesn't bother me a bit.

One of the secrets of training is not to overdo. I never work a new animal more than fifteen minutes at a stretch. At the end of that time I send the creature back

to his cage to relax and rest. Both males and females thrive on this kind of treatment, although after the rest period the males are characteristically scrappier than the females. They reenter the ring determined to try every possible means of bluffing me out of my boss-ship, and only when they have exhausted all the cat ruses do they surrender. Once they're convinced I'm boss, they start clicking and go through their paces with genuine zest, sometimes surpassing the females in this respect.

Recently my cross-examiners have been asking me whether there is any truth in that familiar the-show-must-go-on philosophy that is always stressed in circus fiction. The answer is "yes." Though I'd like to add that one of the reasons for the existence of this philosophy is that it is good business. I will give you an example in terms of my own act.

One night, during my 1932 engagement in New York City, I was standing in the alley that leads to the center ring, waiting to go on. My lions and tigers had poured into the steel arena in which I perform and all I was waiting for was the announcement of the silk-hatted Joe Humphreys of the circus world who tells the audience how good I am.

"We will now witness the daring feats of Clyde Beatty," bellowed the announcer. "Clyde Beatty, the world's youngest and most daring—"

At this point there was a loud report. The blank-cartridge pistol that I always carry into the arena had somehow gone off in its holster. It had burned a hole in my white trousers and had painfully seared my right thigh, drawing blood. But the announcement was over, and I was supposed to be entering the ring. Instead, I

was having a bucket of water tossed at me to extinguish the flame started by the pistol-shot. In other words, I was on fire at the very moment I was due to step out and perform.

A jumble of thoughts flashed through my mind. This new injury must be very close to a wound that had not yet entirely healed—the one dealt me by Nero in my encounter with the lion that almost cost me my life. How close was it? Had it reached the old wound? Had I time for treatment? . . . There was an awkward pause that became increasingly awkward. Should I take a chance and perform? Or get treatment first? I looked down. My trousers were badly scorched. The water and the burn had raised the devil with their immaculateness. Hardly the right way to appear before a jammed house at Madison Square Garden.

That pause was growing worse and worse. It was probably no more than five seconds altogether, but five seconds can seem an eternity to a waiting audience. The thought of possible infection in my old wound scared me. Blood-poisoning had had me on my back for ten weeks. I'd better have treatment at once. Sure! The only sensible thing to do. And then I found myself quickly vetoing my own suggestion and making a dash for the arena. The thought of delaying any longer horrified me; and there I was performing—soiled trousers, injured thigh, lowered morale, and all!

And let me add hastily that there was no sentimentality involved in what I did. The trouble with most of the-show-must-go-on stuff in circus fiction is that the performer gives his performance, despite the almost unsurmountable obstacles that confront him, because it is the "code" of the big top to die for the dear old

circus if necessary. That's rubbish. The owners expect no such imbecile loyalty.

The plain common sense of the matter is that it hurts business to take a much advertised act out of the show, even for one performance, and it is taken out only when staging it is physically impossible. That is why more than one performer has gone on when he should have been in bed. The public is reasonable when it knows the facts, but frequently you can't make a convincing explanation of a short-rations show. It is usually easier to put on the whole show, as advertised, despite accidents or other handicaps. Which is my candid answer to all the inquirers who want to know about the familiar slogan: "The show must go on."

Another frequently asked question is: "What animal do you consider the hardest to train?" My answer: the black leopard. In fact, the species is almost untrainable.

It took me three months to do with a black leopard—the only one I've ever attempted to train—what I normally accomplish in two weeks with a new lion or tiger. The coal-black devil is still performing, in a prelim group that precedes my lion-tiger act. A vicious lady, with all the savagery of her treacherous species, she's made plenty of trouble for me.

A short time ago, I was giving a special performance in Detroit. I was working my black leopard in a small act with four bears. The bears took their places and I signaled the boy at the chute to send the trouble-maker in. Knowing her habits, I expected a charge, and the leopardess didn't disappoint me. As she leaped straight at me, I sidestepped, but she swerved in mid-air, miraculously twisting her body snake-fashion, and

knocked me down. To protect my face I threw up my right arm, as I had done before in similar situations.

Before the attendant outside the arena could drive her off she got me through the biceps with her teeth. He managed to reach her with a long whip and when he called her name she made a lunge for the place where he stood, charging against the bars of the ring in a frenzied attempt to get at him. This gave me a chance to rise and grab the protective chair she had knocked out of my hand in her first charge. Seeing the futility of trying to get the attendant, the sable villainess again turned her attention on me.

As she prepared to charge, I held my chair out to ward off the attack. This time she would not fool me with any of her tricks, I vowed. But she did. Bringing into play all the cunning of her species, she made a sudden shift in her plan of attack. Instead of leaping at the chair she dashed under it, getting me around the legs with her paws. She scratched me pretty badly, but I drove her off with my whip before she could do any real damage.

"What is the smartest animal you've ever trained?" My interrogators frequently hurl that one at me. The answer? The bear. He can be taught more tricks than any other animal. You'll realize what can be done with bears when I tell you that despite the fact that all animals have a deadly fear of fire I've taught bears to carry lighted torches in their mouths. And have got them to the point where they were nonchalant about it, doing their stuff with the torches as calmly as they did their more conventional tricks.

I gave up working with bears because the public does not have a proper appreciation of the dangers involved, and one cannot succeed in my field except in an act that hammers home the hazardous nature of the performance. People are so used to tame bears (the ones in Yellowstone Park are a good example) that they do not give a trainer much credit for a bear act.

This is so even when a man works with polar bears. All bears strike the show-going public as tame. People do not realize that there are few animals more dangerous than the polar bear. His claws aren't so bad as those of the lion or the tiger, but he bites ten times where these cats bite once. His specialty is to start biting at the ankle and work his way up the leg in a few seconds. It will come as a surprise to most readers that Jack Bonavita, one of the greatest trainers of all time, was killed by a polar bear. Jack Hubert, the "armless wonder" of the Ringling Brothers-Barnum & Bailey Circus, had one of his arms removed by the same species. That was in the days when Jack was an animal-trainer. A lion, by the way, got the other arm. It was then that the dauntless Hubert, one of the gamest men in the world, took up armless-wondering as a profession.

I'm often asked whether the act I am doing to-day, in which I present forty lions and tigers of mixed sexes, isn't too dangerous. I used to say "no." But I'm beginning to wonder.

One of the things that brought me up short was the statement of Carl Lorenz Hagenbeck, of the fourth generation of the "wild-animal Hagenbecks of Hamburg"—the most famous family the animal world

has ever known—that my act is far too risky. On a visit to this country, which, he declared, had for one of its objectives the witnessing of my act, he told an interviewer: "Those cats will get Beatty. The act is too dangerous. But these animal-trainers never quit. The work gets them."

That, as much as anything else, has made me resolve to take fewer chances in the future. With a little resourcefulness I believe I can do it without impairing the effectiveness of my act.

Do methods of training animals vary? Yes, as I said in the beginning. For instance, I am the only trainer in the business who doesn't talk to his animals or shout at them. Mine are all what I call whip, whistle, and body cues. A flick of my whip, combined with a movement of my body, conveys a definite message. I get other commands across by whistling softly through my teeth.

There is no standard of training wild animals. There are few professions that are characterized by more individuality. Of course, there are fundamentals that all trainers observe; but when the animal once grasps these, the field is wide open for originality in getting the beasts of the veldt and the jungle to do new and startling things.

What does an off-duty animal-trainer do for a thrill? Aviation once took most of my spare time. In fact, it became a consuming hobby. But I had to give it up. The boss said it was too dangerous! So I went back to my safe and gentle cats.

People with a fondness for statistics have asked me how many chairs I use in fending off attacks in the arena in the course of a season. My records show that I

used—"consumed" would be a better word, for most of them were utterly demolished by my playful pets—sixty-three chairs last year.

How old is the average animal when his training begins? Two to two and a half years, as I have already stated. It is hard to initiate animals that are much older than that. At five or six, for instance, they are set in their ways and there isn't much that can be done to educate them.

Those are the eleven queries that are oftenest put to me, year in and year out, by the people I meet up and down the various parts of the country which I visit with the circus. Since those who talk to me are fairly representative, I believe I have answered the questions that most frequently enter the minds of persons who want to know how an animal-trainer operates.

## XIV

### *Arena-Struck*

THE animal-trainer's job is so definitely off the beaten track that people have a natural curiosity about how I got started. Was it by accident or design that I became a trainer? I suppose it was a combination of both.

Like most boys, I was circus-crazy. The coming of the circus to Chillicothe, Ohio (a few miles from Bainbridge, where I was born), was always an event in my life. A week before the show actually arrived, the bill-boards would go up all over town, all over the country-side. Every available fence and barn for miles around was plastered with exciting news.

But all of these bright-colored posters did not thrill me equally. Everything in the circus meant entertainment to me, but the bill-boards showing the animal-trainer in the big cage with his wild beasts excited me most of all. He seemed so calm and collected in this den of savage creatures. How brave he must be, I thought, not to be worried by these great animals that, according to the posters—one of which I still possess—could "snap his frail body in two with a single bite!"

I once had a sizable collection of circus posters. I acquired one of them, when I was about twelve years old, by running errands for a local laundryman for a whole

week. And I didn't get the poster, a somewhat soiled window "paster," until the show had left town. If you don't think I struck much of a bargain with the laundryman, you can't guess what pleasure I derived from being the sole possessor of that entrancing picture of the trainer in his den of "roaring, snapping, snarling fiends of the jungle." Because of my treasure, I had considerable standing among the boys with whom I went to school. When we played circus that poster added a touch of realism that always pleased our audience. With it we sometimes "drew" a dozen kids at a penny a piece; without it we might have played to an empty back yard.

Realizing as I do what those circus posters meant to me, I'm not sure they didn't play as big a part as anything else in giving me my ambition to become an animal-trainer. I was always fond of animals—in fact, I once had five dogs that were the despair of my mother—so I suppose I was fertile soil.

I am not exaggerating when I say that there was one circus poster in particular, a masterpiece of lurid advertising that I'll never forget, which in my boyhood days gave me as big a thrill as anything that has happened to me in all the years since—and plenty has happened. This was the biggest one put on display by the coming circus, and the one that had the greatest amount of detail. It was so big it could be used only on the sides of buildings in town and big barns in the outskirts. In this masterly composition the trainer was literally besieged by animals. There were so many of them—tigers, bears, elephants, lions, leopards, etc.—it was hard to understand how the trainer could turn around without running the risk of having his "frail body" bitten in two by one of these "bloodthirsty man-

eaters," some of which I recall, were publicized as beasts that frequently devoured their trainers.

I now know that the trainer who risked having his "frail body" snapped in twain by one of these villainous brutes weighed over two hundred pounds; but at the time, as I sat open-mouthed and watched him from a twenty-five-cent seat, any one weighing less than three hundred pounds would have seemed definitely frail beside a lion. I recall experiencing a momentary disappointment when all the animals depicted in the billboards did not turn up in the arena, but this feeling quickly passed in the excitement of watching the trainer make his charges perform. His feat seemed the most wonderful thing in the world. I began to cherish a secret ambition to become an animal-trainer.

To me, every detail of the performance was marvelous. The way the trainer cracked his whip was in itself pure magic. The sound reverberated through the tent like the sharp report of a gun. How could any one learn to do such things? It was almost too much for me to grasp; it fairly overwhelmed me.

And when the trainer stuck his head "in the lion's mouth"! Lord! Shall I ever forget the first time I saw that trick? I later learned to evaluate it properly, but at the time it seemed to me that I was witnessing a super-miracle. The man performing it was to me the greatest man in the world.

Not long after I witnessed the head-in-the-mouth trick, I inaugurated in our neighborhood the game of "circus." I had little trouble communicating my zeal for this pastime to the children I played with. We gave several performances and then decided to stampede the

kid population by putting on "the greatest show on earth."

Once or twice, I let my excitement over animal-training run away with me. One of my companions, a boy in my class at school, had a genuine talent for balancing himself. He could walk a longer distance on a fence, without support, than any other kid in the district. So it was only natural that he should want to be starred in our "greatest show" as a tight-rope walker. This caused complications, as I had previously announced that, in the rôle of animal-trainer, I was to be the main attraction. As I had originated the game and possessed the poster that we counted upon to draw the crowd, I naturally felt I should be the star. In our make-believe circus, my five dogs would be the wild animals. As a matter of fact, in these early days, I had a very definite knack for teaching dogs to do tricks, and I was confident that when I started making my "wild animals" jump over sticks, walk on their hind legs, and do the other things I had taught them, our public would quickly forget the tight-rope walker and his pretensions to stardom.

I had the advantage in that my act was a reality, while that of our tight-rope walker (his name was Joe and I wonder where he is to-day) was as yet non-existent. We all knew he was a skilled balancer, but he had no apparatus that could be used in our "greatest show." We had all seen him walk fences and there would be no novelty in his doing that again.

Joe's desire to be the star seemed a bit unreasonable in view of the fact that he had no equipment for performing anything that even resembled a tight-rope act,

whereas I had a quintet of "savage beasts fresh from the jungle." Naturally I, with my "roaring demons," should be the featured performer.

All the kids connected with the enterprise agreed with me. And then Joe fooled us all. He got his dad to rig up a tight-rope in his back yard! Joe's father stretched a thick rope from one tree to another about five yards away. The rope, which was about three feet from the ground, was fastened to the trunks of the trees by means of heavy staples.

Joe invited his circus associates, including me, over to his back yard to witness a demonstration which went over with a bang. His rope-walking was loudly applauded and automatically I took a back seat. Joe's stunt got a much more enthusiastic reception than my animal act. He was now definitely the star of the show. Even my argument that I possessed the only poster in the crowd got me nowhere.

Of course, we had to hold our opening performance in Joe's back yard. No other back yard connected with the organization had two trees so close together and so convenient for tight-rope walking. So Joe was more than ever the Big Shot of our circus. In addition, his very own back yard was to be the scene of our introduction to the public. An able politician, Joe.

Mournfully I realized that Joe, in addition to supplanting me, had most emphatically relegated me and my ferocious beasts to the rear. Every one wanted to talk to Joe. It was Joe this and Joe that. No one looked at my man-eating mutts any more.

Once I ventured to point out that you have to have more than a tight-rope act to put on a circus, but I was quickly squelched. I brought the subject up again and

almost lost caste. One of the kids told me what I could do with my poster. "You think because you've got a circus picture you can run the show!" he exclaimed. "Well, we don't need your picture. Every one's coming just to see Joe!"

Came the big day. And imagine my humiliation when I discovered that my associates didn't want my poster! I had to beg them to let me put it up—and only a week or two before, that same poster had been enough to give me standing. In those happy days I had been begged to tell over and over again the story of how I had come to possess it.

Joe, in addition to being the star of the show, was the announcer, general manager, and everything else he could think of. He announced that we would start with a parade up the road. This would wind up in his back yard and then we would start the show.

The first number, if I remember rightly, was a clown act. Then Joe (as Joe in his rôle of announcer announced) would do a tight-rope stunt. Then I would do my animal act. Then Joe (Joe announced again) would do another tight-rope stunt.

As I recall it, Joe scheduled himself to follow every other turn with a tight-rope stunt. This was an ambitious undertaking, for Joe's whole repertoire consisted of walking across the stretch of rope and landing in the arms of a boy at the other end. Sometimes he varied the procedure by winking on the way across, but this was his only variation.

However, Joe was popular and perhaps his public would have stood for the repetition. He never had a chance to find out. The parade over, he called for the clown act. This featured two or three boys in false faces

falling down repeatedly, turning somersaults in which they bumped into each other, etc.

Then Joe, in his capacity as announcer, announced that Joe, in his rôle as star of the show, would do his tight-rope act. Loud applause, in which I maliciously refrained from joining, I regret to report. In fact, my one desire was to punch Joe in the nose. I found I didn't like Joe much.

Joe, aided by an assistant, got on his tight-rope and started to do his stuff. He had not advanced more than two or three feet when the staple that held the rope to one of the trees came loose and Joe and his rope came toppling to the ground. It was a fall of only three feet and only Joe's pride was hurt. But I suppose, after all, it was humiliating to one who was the star, the announcer, and the general manager of a show.

As he scrambled to his feet, Joe thought of a clever "out." I was responsible! He had seen me loosen the staple!

This was too much. I might have done it if I had thought of it, for I was sick of Joe. But I hadn't been near his darned staples. I wouldn't have minded so much if Joe had merely hinted that I was guilty, for I was quite capable of doing something mean to him (like partly severing the rope, perhaps), but I thought it was going too far to say that he had actually seen me loosen the staple. I expressed this sentiment by hitting him plumb on the nose, thus realizing an ambition of several days' standing. Joe swung back at me, but I ducked. I hit him on the nose again. And again. And again. I don't know why, but it was the only part of his face I was interested in.

Joe hit me a few times, but my recollection is that

he didn't do much damage. I do recall being suddenly assaulted from behind. One of Joe's pals hit me. Soon three or four of them were hitting me. Then suddenly every one was hitting me, including Joe's dad.

I yelled to my bloodthirsty beasts to "sic" my assailants, but these jungle demons were too busy chasing fleas. Retreat was my only salvation. I took to my heels and ran. This roused my languid quintet. Finding their legs, they came after me, yipping joyously at my heels as though we were playing a game.

I never made much headway in this neighborhood circus of ours. After teaching one of my ferocious animals to jump over a stick, on his hind legs, I regained part of my old following, but fate was against me. A boy whose father could afford a pony moved into the neighborhood and again I was totally eclipsed. A kid with a pony was plainly more of a head-liner than I could hope to be with my mangy man-eaters.

It is a far cry to those vanished times, although perhaps that makes me sound older than I am. Only fifteen years have elapsed since the days when I stopped playing circus in Bainbridge and Chillicothe—which is another way of saying that I am twenty-seven and a half years old at this writing.

Three years after I vied with Joe for the stardom of our back-yard show, the lure of the circus became too much for me. I had tried to fight off the fever, but it was no use. When I was thirteen, I wanted to run away and join a circus, but I didn't dare apply for even the humblest job. I was too much of a shrimp and I was sure I should be laughed at.

By the next year, I had tacked on some height and I

secretly applied for a job when the circus came to town, but there was no opening. However, when it came the following season (I was fifteen at the time and about to start my second year in the Chillicothe High School), I had better luck: I landed a job as cage boy. What an event in my life this was! A regular employee of a circus! My compensation was five dollars a month and my keep, and it seemed a great deal at the time.

My main worry was that I was in bad with my family, but they were quick to forgive me, though I had kept them for two or three days without any knowledge of my whereabouts—and of course they were right in objecting to that.

How can I describe my delight on finding myself an assistant, even in a humble rôle, to honest-to-goodness animal-trainers? It was an honor to clean the cages, to fetch water for the animals, to do anything that was asked of me. When I wasn't busy around the animals, I watched the show's chief trainer and his two assistants drill their charges. On the road I watched every move they made and in winter quarters I did the same.

While I didn't dare to tell anybody about it, for fear of being laughed at, by the time I was sixteen I began to contemplate seriously becoming an animal-trainer myself. In fact, I was growing cocky enough to believe that I could put over some of the lesser tricks performed by my superiors. This was my great secret. When I went to bed, I thought about it with satisfaction until I fell asleep, but in the morning when I faced the men whom I served as a sort of chambermaid, I was afraid that they might read my thoughts, and I would slink out of sight when their gaze rested on me too long.

And a little over a year later, I was an assistant trainer! The men whose ridicule I had feared seemed greatly pleased that I wanted to enter the arena. Most cage boys, they told me, preferred to remain cage boys. The trainers were more than glad to give instruction to any one who was willing to face the animals in the big cage.

In those early days, one trainer in particular couldn't do enough for me—Chubby Gilfoyle, to whom I have already paid tribute. Chubby, indeed, had so much faith in me that I became over-confident. But I conquered this folly. Or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that Chubby knocked it out of me.

The purpose of this chapter is not to trace my career as a trainer. That has been done elsewhere in these pages. I am merely trying to tell how it feels to be circus-crazy—and what it means to be taken seriously.

Everything about the circus appealed to me, but the trainers and the wild animals were ninety per cent of the show to me. If some one had volunteered to help me become an acrobat or a clown, I would have shown my appreciation, of course; although that was not what I really wanted. I wanted to be an animal-trainer. In other words, I was not so much circus-crazy as arena-struck. It was the big cage that fascinated me more than anything else in the world.

This is why, when I became a full-fledged trainer, I was able to understand the boys that applied for jobs as assistants to me in any capacity. Their ambitions had to be taken seriously even when I could do nothing for them. Two or three times I was able to provide jobs—unimportant and poorly paid ones, but jobs as good as

the first one I got. And I also provided, and still provide, instruction to any willing and promising assistant.

When I think of my own struggles, I wonder if it wouldn't be more intelligent to assume a hard-boiled attitude toward those who want to take up my profession. Perhaps I ought to be kind only to those who show some marked talent at the outset. But I doubt if I had anything but determination and a fixed idea to begin with, and that makes me tolerant of the aspirations of others, however crude and half-baked these yearners may seem.

When any one comes to me who thinks he wants to become an animal-trainer, I cuss him out. I pronounce him an idiot, in twenty different ways. Then, if he can't be shaken from his ambition—in other words, if he's as mulish about it as I was when I first got the idea—I do all I can to help him.

There are hundreds of boys who want to become animal-trainers. My mail conveys this message to me daily. Tell the aspirants that there are only about a half-dozen jobs in this field in America that are worth holding and you make no impression. They still want to be animal-trainers; at least, this is true of most of them.

How many amazing, humorous, touching incidents occur to me as I contemplate Young America's ambition to rule the big cage! Once, in 1930, as I made an inspection tour of my cages I came upon a ragged boy who stood, imitating my arena stance, in front of a cage that held four hundred pounds of tiger. In one hand he held a little whip, in the other a toy pistol. He kept pulling the trigger of the pop-gun until he had the tiger lunging at the bars. I watched him from an alley in the cat-shed about ten yards from where he stood—al-

though if I had been ten inches away he would have been equally unaware of my existence.

An attendant caught the boy and was about to hustle him out of the shed. At this point, I interfered. I ordered the attendant to let the boy go, which does not prove I have a big heart but simply shows that on occasion sentimentality can betray me into an utter disregard for discipline. The attendant was well within his rights in glaring at me. The boy should not have been in the cat-barn, and certainly he had no business exciting the tiger with that foolish toy gun.

However, something about the youngster appealed to me. I spent most of the day telling him how wild animals, especially lions and tigers, are trained. It was a lot of information to pour into the ears of a boy who couldn't have been over nine or ten. But he lapped it up and that was my excuse.

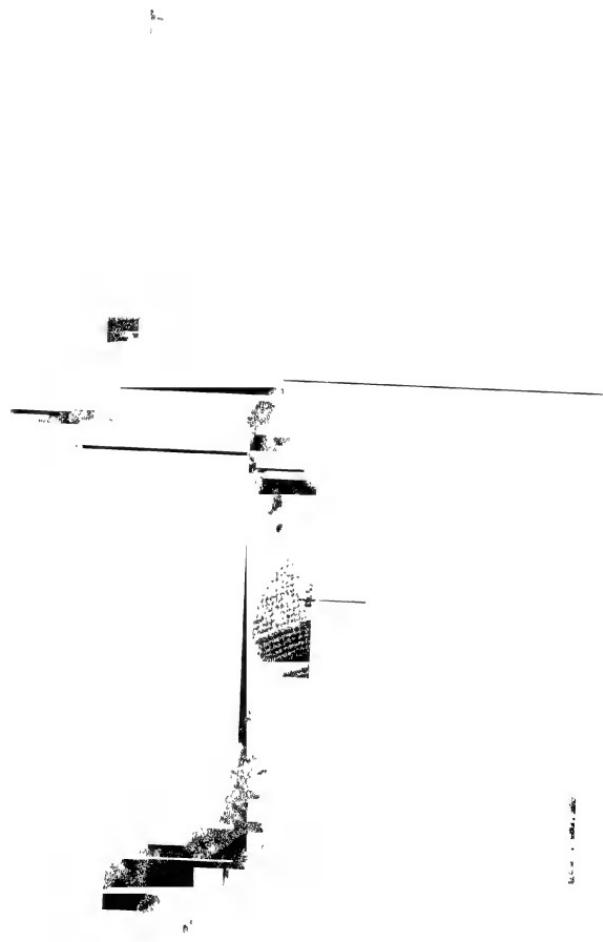
I wouldn't leave my picturesque profession for anything in the world. Life would seem dull in any other job. But I wouldn't be telling the truth if I didn't point out that no one would ever think of becoming an animal-trainer if he knew what it entails in the way of hardships. Once you've survived the hard knocks, you keep on going, for you know what it's all about and you might as well use your knowledge. But that's no reason why you should encourage recruits.

I've done well in my field, but if I had a son who wanted to enter it, I'd put him across my knee and wallop him.



**ANIMAL-TRAINING PICTURED**

Teaching an animal to mount a pedestal is one of the early stages of training. I do not attempt to accomplish this in one operation; I am satisfied, at the start, if I can persuade my pupil to place his front paws on top of the pedestal. Frequently, in attempting to do so, the beginner upsets the pedestal, as illustrated on the opposite page.



Once an animal—and this applies to the tiger and the leopard as well as to the lion—discovers that the pedestal on which he places his paws is not a strange new enemy that is planning to attack him, he begins to develop confidence. After he has placed his front paws many, many times in succession on top of his pedestal, in the manner illustrated, he is ready for his next assignment. Sometimes two or three weeks elapse before an animal is performing this simple function to the satisfaction of the trainer.



Pedestaled! But in the early stages of training the "newly seated," as they are sometimes called, like to show that they are not "push-overs." This is particularly true of the males, who from the start resist the trainer's wiles much more stubbornly than the females.

Here we see a big male lion properly pedestaled. To prove, however, that the process of pedestalizing has not killed the fight in him, the animal is lashing out with his right paw.

The experienced trainer is always ready for such attacks and nimble footwork enables him to get out of the way in time.



When I have succeeded in making an animal mount his pedestal with regularity, I teach him to leave his perch for a higher one in the arena. This seems a simple operation, but that is because we are accustomed to thinking in terms of human reactions. For instance, who would contend that even a three- or a four-year-old child standing on a stairway and asked to mount the next step was being assigned a difficult task?

Of course, the child would understand what you were saying and would respond. Animals can be spoken to also, but only by means of cues. And cues are harder to understand than words.

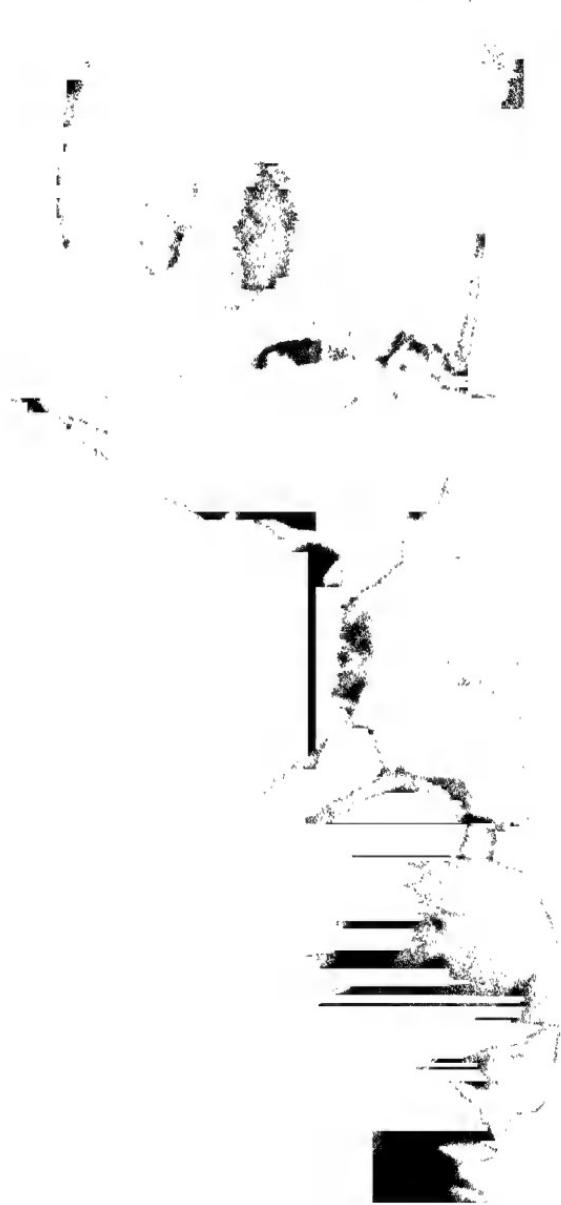
Here you see me coaxing a lion to leave his pedestal for a "high seat."



The lion shown on the opposite page is leaving his pedestal for a "high seat." While he is not exactly eager to do my bidding, he is responding to "whip cueing." By gently tapping the high seat with my whip (a simple form of cueing that works well with intelligent animals) I succeed in making my pupil understand what is expected of him.



The next stage consists in moving my lion from “high seat” to “high seat.” A perfectly trained animal can be made to take any pedestal in the arena; but of course true perfection in the big cage is as rare as it is anywhere else.



In the early stages of training, animals that are specially ferocious have to be collared before they are taken into the training den. The collar used is made of heavy double-ply leather, fitted with a loose ring to which is attached a chain two or three feet long. From the far end of the chain a rope is carried out through the bars of the big cage, and thus the animal is restrained until the trainer accustoms him at least partially to his new duties. The picture shows the process of putting on the collar and chain.

The use of a collapsible cage simplifies my task. This cage has a back that can be pushed forward until the inmate is wedged firmly between the back and the front of the cage. The wooden pole is a "pacifier." It gives the animal something to chew on while the collar is being adjusted.



This tigress made lots of work for me before I succeeded in "seat-breaking" her! She is of the nervous, fidgety type that prefers pacing around the arena to sitting still, and it was weeks before I succeeded in convincing her that no harm would befall her if she sat down.

My work was not over when I had "block-seated" her (see Chapter I). When I transferred her from a block seat to the type of pedestal shown here, she "fought" the pedestal, knocking it over time after time before she made up her mind that she could mount it with safety.

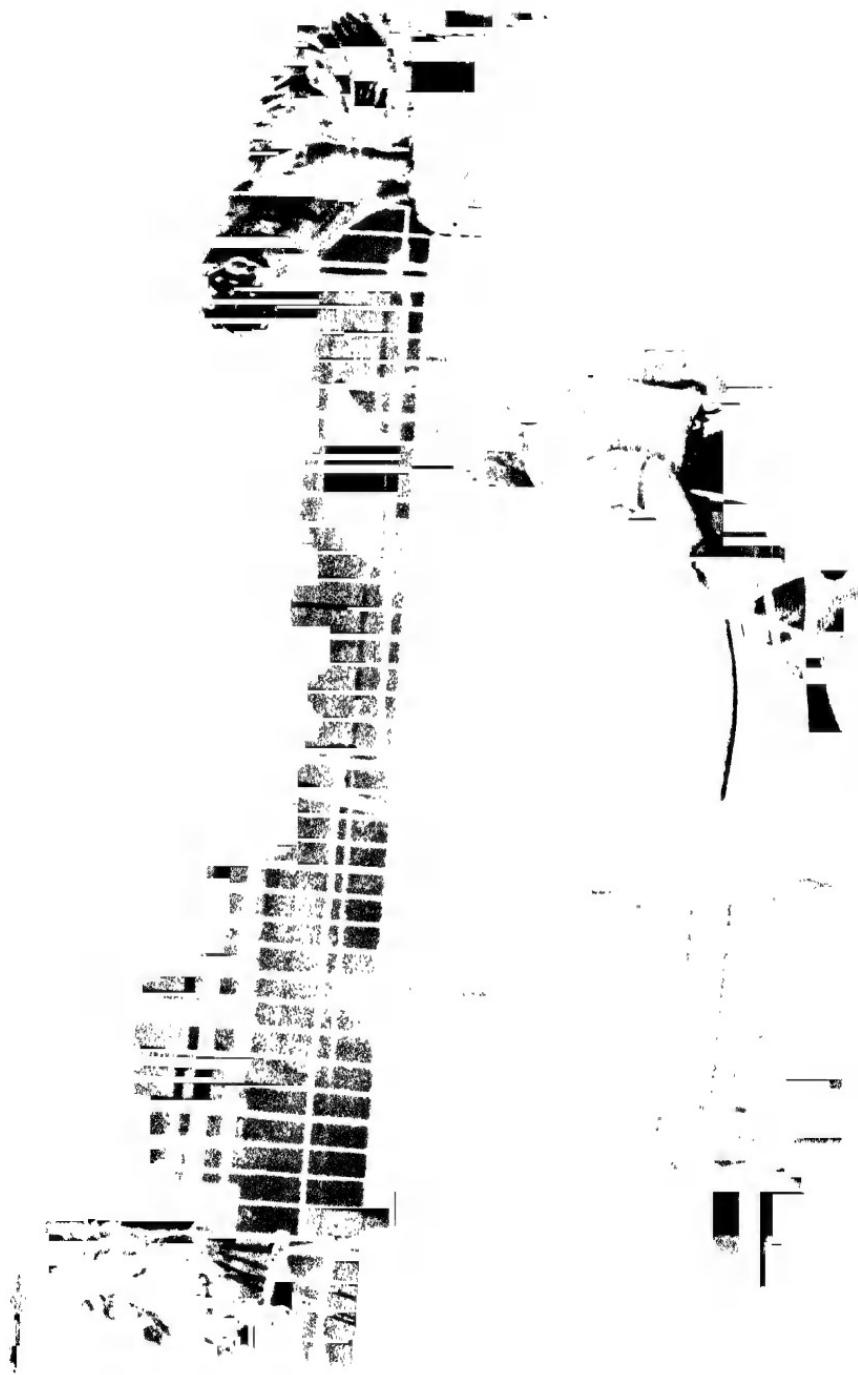


Entering the arena from the safety-cage. Before my entrance, the door is carefully tested to make certain that it will not jam. The chair is tested to insure that all four legs are sound. The whip is one with a new braided lash which will crack properly. My mind must be at its alertest as I push into the ring, for already over twenty animals have been admitted to the arena and they are milling around, free of restraint, until the moment when I get them pedestaled. Chair, gun, and whip must be ready for immediate use. A path must be cleared, and control of the animals almost instantly gained.



As I made clear in Chapter III, lions and tigers are natural enemies.

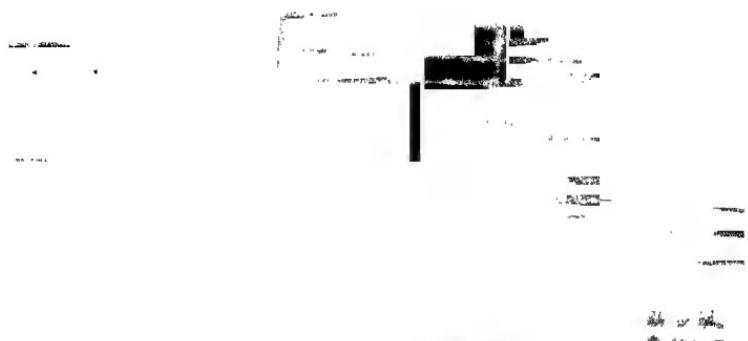
In this picture I am getting ready to let the tiger on the right out of the arena. The attendant at the tunnel door is prepared to release the striped cat as soon as the animal jumps to the floor. From past performances I know that the lion (to the left) is all set to leap on the tiger's back as the latter makes his exit. He has done it before and must be prevented from doing it again.



Just a little family argument, with virtually every member of the lion family taking part. Lions, in contrast to tigers, always "gang up," even in debate. If one lion decides to indulge in a little oral abuse of the trainer, most of the relatives and neighbors take up the tune. The answer can't be made vocally, because they have too much of an advantage as far as noise is concerned. In fact, I never try to "talk" to my animals; all my instructions are given either by soft whistling or by body, arm, or whip cues.



A new candidate for my act, going through the earlier stages of training. I am alone in the arena with him, and because he is a bit of an unknown quantity, I keep fairly close to the door of the safety-cage (which is plainly visible in the background), working him only in that section of the arena. Three bars of the safety-cage door are carefully painted white, to enable me to locate it instantly and in a pinch reach it with a minimum of diverted attention and no chance of error. In the chapter entitled "Close Calls" I describe one occasion when I failed to get that cage door open in an emergency, and had some tough moments in consequence.



This lion is resisting my efforts to “center” him. Having gotten him off his pedestal, I am trying to coax him over to the middle of the big cage, where I plan to round out his education.



In a normal circus season I use from sixty to seventy chairs, which are my principal defense inside the arena. Old-time trainers used a pole, which gave an oncoming animal its initial point of attack, and which it could grab in its teeth and chew on. The advantage of a chair is that instead of one point, it has four, which distract the animal's attention somewhat, as he can't decide where to attack first. Then, if he chews up one leg, or smashes it with a well-directed blow, the trainer still has three more to go on with.

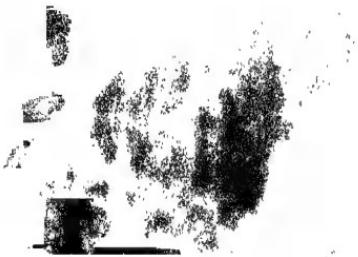
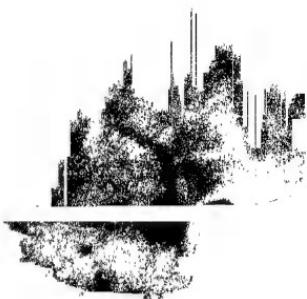
In this picture, I am holding off a lioness with my chair, at the same time maneuvering to keep the animal from getting a grip on it, as I shall be called upon in a second to swing around and use my shield on the second lioness, who is seen coming up to join the lady I am facing.



The lion shown in this picture is trying to decide which point of the chair he will attack first. In the background, several of his buddies are watching alertly, ready to gang up with him if the slightest occasion offers. He is poised with his back feet well apart, so his next motion may be either to the right or to the left. I am already in motion, swinging on my right foot and cueing him toward my left, careful to keep at a reasonably safe distance from the pedestals behind me.



The lion has decided to attack my chair with a haymaker from his right. That blow will have enough behind it to make kindling wood of any chair that ever existed. However, my chair is already in motion, and will escape most of the force of the blow. It may lose a leg or two, however. Then probably I shall retreat to the door of the safety-cage and replace it with a fresh chair, handed me by an attendant. The lion's annoyance at this moment is due to the fact that I have interrupted a little love-affair, and he is afraid some rival may appear before he can get back to his pedestal.



You will observe that this tiger, instead of responding to the first of a series of cues by means of which I plan to make him roll the globe shown on the left, has assumed a reclining position and is preparing to lash out with the left paw. In the next picture . . .



The animal has taken up an unorthodox position at the very back of the pedestal. This is his way of saying, "Darn your old cues!"

My first job is to get the tiger to move forward on the pedestal. Once this is done, I must cue him to leave his seat for the arena floor. Then I cue him to mount the globe on the left that is still waiting for him. It isn't an easy matter to persuade an animal that doesn't even respond to a "leave-your seat" cue to mount a big sphere, but it can be done, as the next picture shows.



Now the tiger is rolling the globe. This is one of the most difficult stunts in the whole realm of animal-training. Certainly, the process by means of which a tiger is taught to perform it is as laborious as anything my strange profession knows. Sometimes it takes weeks merely to persuade him to mount the globe, which at first is held firm. It is not unusual for three or four months to elapse before an animal, however alert and intelligent, actually succeeds in rolling the globe.

I have not fully accomplished my purpose in this picture. The tiger is rolling the globe, but he is about to leap to the arena floor, and, as you will see if you look at my lips, I am "whistle-cueing" him in an effort to get him to change his mind.



At last the animal is rolling the globe in the correct manner. All four feet are planted solidly on the globe and he is moving toward his objective—the end of the “skid”—with confidence and a nice precision. As the sphere rolls forward, he moves along with it, cleverly working his paws at the rate of speed necessary to maintain his balance.



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The start of a fight between a tiger and a lion. Less than a second after this remarkable photograph was snapped, the animals—which had been making passes at each other for weeks—were locked together in deadly combat on the floor of the arena.



The lion and tiger depicted in the preceding picture are here shown at the height of their struggle. It took a heavy stream from a big fire-hose to separate them. The water was shot at their mouths and had the effect of making them stop for breath, this being one of the standard means of getting fighting animals to relax their jaws.



The custom of “doubling” for featured motion-picture players confronted with dangerous stunts in their pictures was reversed in the filming of this volume by Universal. I did the doubling for all the other characters when they actually had to enter the arena. The illustration on the opposite page shows me (to the left) doubling for Raymond Hatton (to the right). Hatton took the part of an old-time trainer, long since retired, who gets drunk and enters the cage, where a tiger leaps on him. Although I had on Mr. Hatton’s elaborate military uniform, and did my best to look like him, the disguise didn’t fool my tiger.



The uniform I am wearing in this "doubling" picture is similar to that used thirty years ago by virtually all the great trainers of the day. Some of them even experimented with various kinds of light armor under it. Personally, I find any heavy uniform a real handicap in the cage, because it impedes the rapid movement which is my best defense, slowing me up at least twenty-five per cent. After many experiments, I have adopted a costume consisting of a light linen shirt and trousers of white duck or light-weight cloth, with boots of soft leather. I wouldn't for anything but photographic purposes dress as shown in the picture.

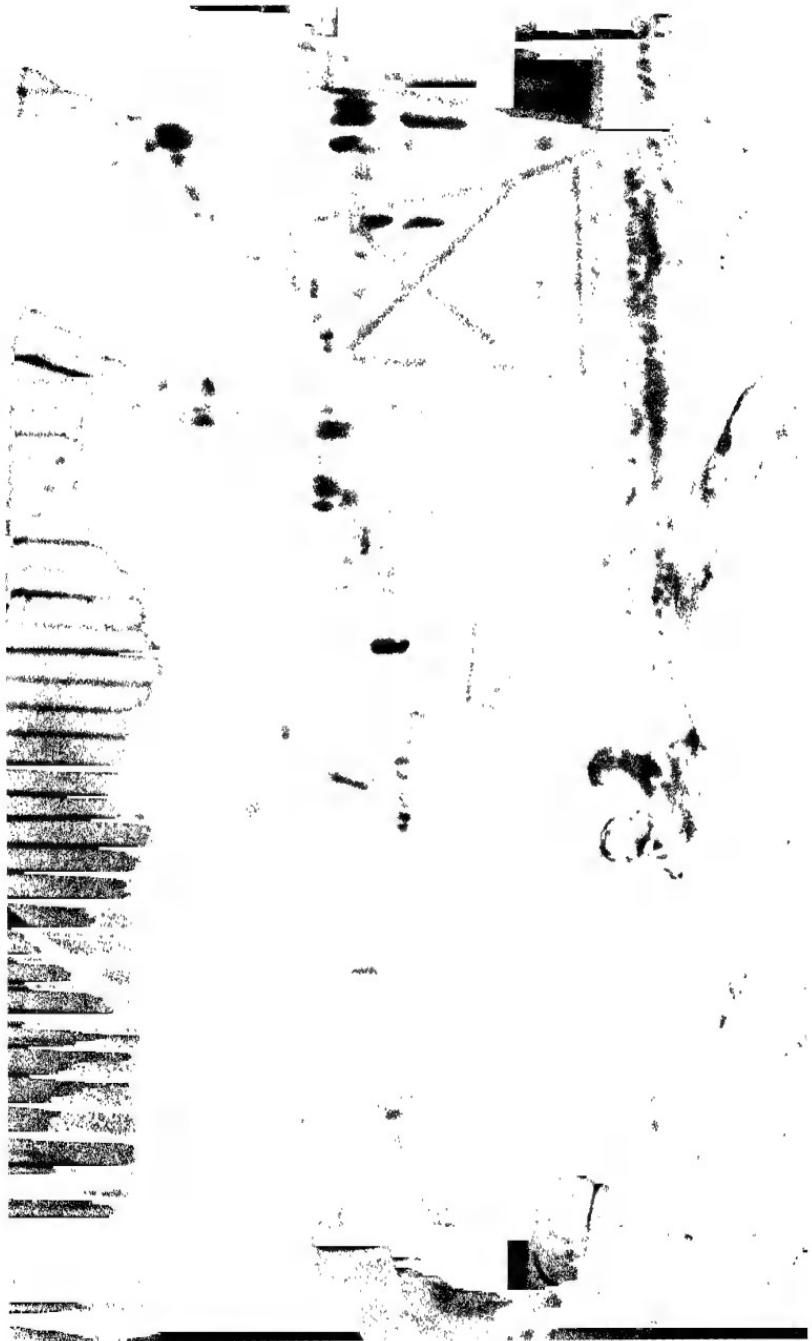


This is the sort of light apparel that I find ideal in the arena. Speed, as I have pointed out, is my main reliance for personal safety in the big cage, and anything that impedes fast footwork means a definite increase in danger and risk.



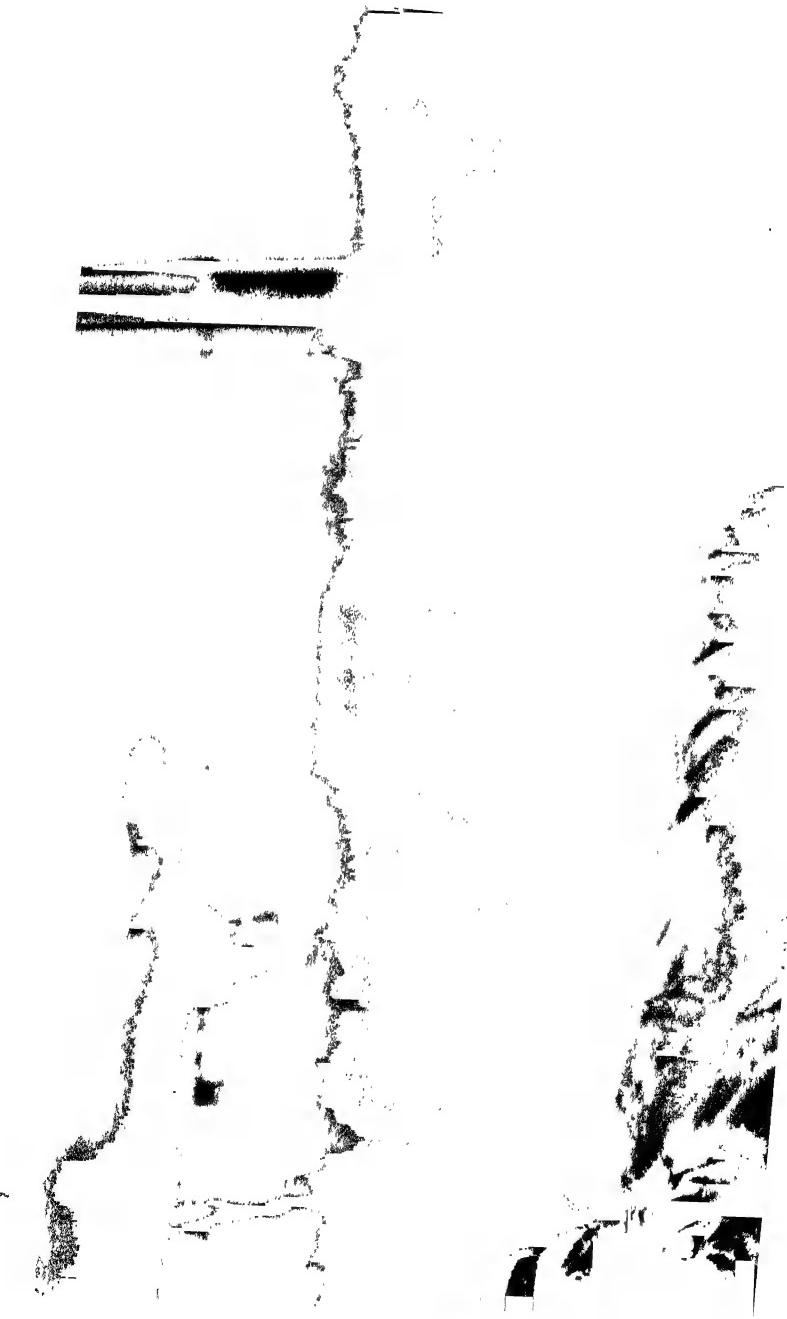
The “roll-over” trick (discussed in “No Two Alike” and other chapters) is one of the most difficult I teach. I originated it, and it has never, to my knowledge, been successfully imitated.

In this stunt I feature a tiger rolling over and over on its side with all the meekness of a dog. Getting it into the tiger’s head, without touching the animal—for that is out of the question—that you want her to roll over on her side is no easy matter. Here I show the animal on her side. The next step is to “arm-cue” her to roll over on her back.

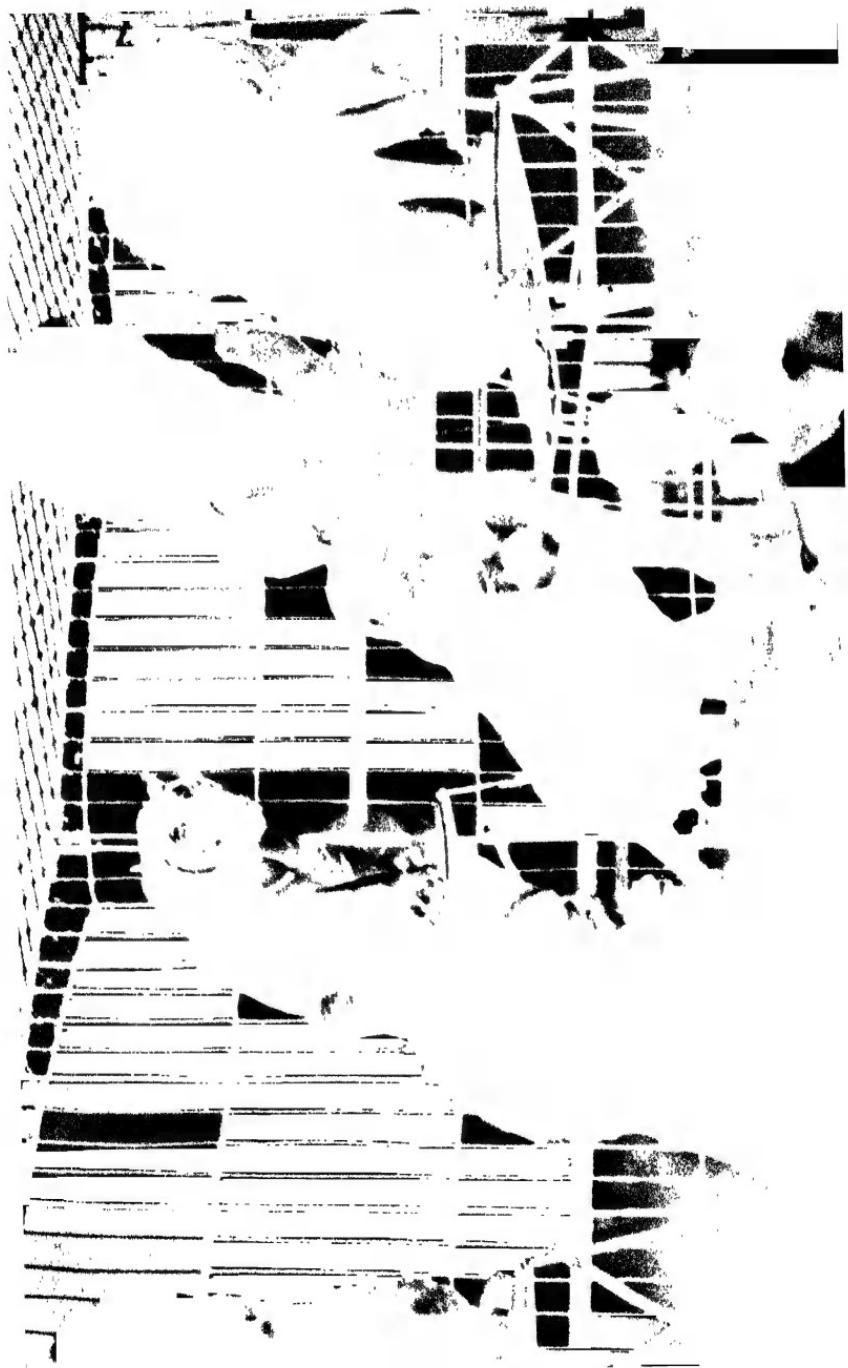


The next stage in the roll-over trick. The animal having rolled over on her back, I am "arm-cueing" her to roll over and over on her side.

The animal here depicted is Rosie, one of the most intelligent tigresses I have ever handled. Note the whiteness of Rosie's right eye. Not long before this picture was taken Rosie participated in an arena fight with a husky lion. She ripped the lion's shoulder and the maned cat retaliated by clawing her eye. Partial blindness resulted, making it necessary for me to find a substitute. Venus, an intelligent young tigress, succeeded her.



Everybody in this group was happy and contented until I came up and suggested a slight rearrangement in seating. Part of my training system is gradually to teach every performer to take any pedestal in the arena. This is often very difficult: the animals get it into their heads that certain seats are theirs and theirs alone. Here I am trying to persuade the two lions in front of me to swap pedestals, and you'd think from the way they behave that I was trying to borrow money. Up above them is Venus, the roll-over tiger, with a look on her face that says, "I've always insisted that most lions are ornery beasts; if you want any help in making them behave, call on me!"



Here I am trying to get the attention of a balky performer. The twisted mouth and wrinkled nose are danger signs that I must not ignore.

The lion, seemingly paying no attention to me, is watching me out of the corner of his eye. He will suddenly whirl and try to catch me unaware. I am familiar with such tactics, however, and shall be ready for him.



“What does an off-duty animal-trainer do for a thrill? Aviation once took most of my spare time. In fact, it became a consuming hobby. But I had to give it up. The boss said it was too dangerous! So I went back to my safe and gentle jungle cats.”



A trainer is never worse off than when he loses his footing. Almost invariably the animal he is facing senses its advantage and charges.

Not a few times, in playing under canvas, I have encountered rain-storms that resulted in a muddy arena. Twice, under such circumstances, I slipped and fell, and only by means of extreme resourcefulness and with the help of attendants outside the big cage did I manage to save myself.



"Trainers for years have made a practice of staring straight into the eyes of the animals that they work at close range. I do it myself. It is part of the stage setting, however. It has no hypnotic effect on the animal. It is just an effective trick of showmanship. . . . The trick is justified, not only because the effect is good, but also because it takes real nerve to get down on one knee—which is usually part of the procedure—and look straight into the eyes of a lion or a tiger that is only a foot or two away."

Another reason for staring into the eyes of a great cat while making him perform is that they frequently act as barometers indicative of his mood. An animal that is planning some mischief usually shows it in his eyes.



To the spectator seated at some distance from the arena, it may seem that I have the lion shown here under control because I have "outstared" him. (See preceding picture and caption.) This close-up plainly shows that my eyes and those of the animal do not meet.



I don't like to get this close to a pedestaled tiger, even when the beast is occupying a "ground seat" providing no real elevation from which to spring.

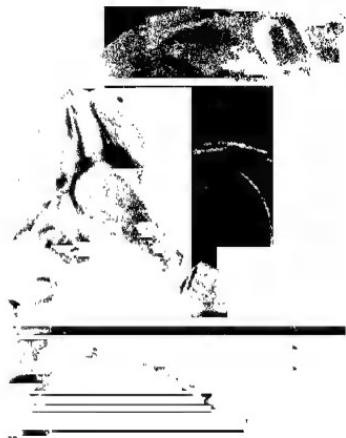
When one of my charges grows stubborn and refuses to leave his or her seat to perform the trick I am calling for, it is necessary to forget the rules that normally apply. In this photograph, I am dangerously close to the animal, but I am ready to meet an assault.



Here, I have a better margin of safety. (In the preceding picture, I was too close to my "floor-seated" charge.)

My tigress, after snarling her defiance, has decided to leave her low pedestal for the arena floor.

Note the animal's capable teeth.



A tiger “teeter-totter.” This is the most unusual and dangerous seesaw known to the circus. The animal in the center of the board is the motive power, and is cued to move back and forth, thereby jouncing his comrades on the two ends up and down. This act is performed against a lively background of pedestaled beasts who frequently forget that they are merely “atmosphere” and do their best to break up the performance.



Occasional physical examinations are made by the circus doctor, partly as routine for his records and partly to satisfy the management that their trainer is in first-class condition. The examination usually includes merely the ordinary tests for respiration and heart, plus that for blood-pressure. Some physicians have been interested in making their examinations on a before-and-after basis, but thus far the results shown have been merely those which would be expected after an equivalent amount of ordinary strenuous physical exercise.



Footwork plays an important part in meeting the charge of an onrushing animal. Here, by means of a whip cue, I am beginning the process of swinging the lion around to my left, to prevent him from backing me too close to the bars. More than one tragedy has taken place in the arena in consequence of an animal's leaping straight for his trainer and pinning him against the bars.



Chester, to my mind, is the handsomest and most completely satisfactory tiger I have ever owned. He has everything—good looks, intelligence, bravery, alertness, and style. He would take the blue ribbon at any national or international tiger beauty contest. He is the D'Artagnan of the tiger world. On one occasion, described in earlier pages of this book, he fought off seven lions and emerged with only minor injuries. In the next two illustrations he is shown, *a la Barrymore*, in full-face and profile.



A full-face of Chester. The trainer must select his animals for their good looks as well as for their capacity to perform. Good looks include color, markings, graceful carriage, facial expression, bristling whiskers, piercing eyes, wide forehead, and so on. The quality of the coat is as important as it might be to a lady who was picking out her next winter's wrap. The "lay" of a tiger's fur—whether it lies flat or tends to stand up—shows a good deal about his general condition. When the individual hairs stand straight up, we know the animal is not really fit.



And, finally, Chester's John Barrymore profile, which is one of the reasons why he is the most photographed, most painted, and most sculptured tiger in existence. Artists have a remarkable fondness for setting themselves the task of reproducing exactly the play of light and shadow in the markings of Chester's face. And the way his whiskers behave is so eccentric that many a photographer has been accused of putting them in with a retouching pencil. Here they are, in an un-retouched photograph.



Cæsar is a fine example of the kind of lion that fills every requirement for a great animal act. In size, appearance, and temperament he is well-nigh ideal. Of course, he is no proper pet for household use; in fact, nothing fiercer ever came out of the jungle, and he's a born trouble-maker. He has a hatred of all tigers that he never tries to conceal. And he's a gang-leader among the lions; upon the slightest pretext he'll call the whole pack into action. Among his special characteristics is his speed: he is the fastest-moving lion I have ever used, and the only one I've known whose speed was comparable to that of a tiger.

Cæsar's speed and his six hundred and fifty pounds combine to make him one of the most formidable animals I have ever faced.



Music has an important part in my act. The dear old circus bandsmen are shown in the background of this picture (minus their glittering dress uniforms), and the notes of brasses and drums are doing their bit to reinforce the drama of each moment. If you don't think animals listen to music, remember how Rosie rolled over to the exact rhythm of the drums; or see how my entire troupe waits for the chord in G which is the signal to leave the pedestals and go back to the cages. On more than one occasion, the members of the band have tasted real danger—for example, the Cleveland escape, which I have described elsewhere in this volume.



"My home, during the months when the circus is on the road, is my dressing-room. And my dressing-room is a big circus wagon. Its exterior is all covered with red and gold paint, gaudy enough to serve as one of the units in an old-fashioned circus parade down Main Street. Its interior is as plain as that of any ordinary moving van."

In other words, I virtually live on wheels. For as soon as our circus train chugs into a new town my wagon is unloaded and I'm back in it again.



I number among my circus friends many elephants. But I must not take any liberties with their friendship. Elephants hate lions and tigers and I must be careful not to visit my pachyderm friends too soon after I have given my cats a workout, for the smell of lions and tigers has started more than one elephant stampede.



The stripes of the zebra do not mix with the stripes of the tiger.

The elephant's reaction to the tiger (discussed on the preceding page) is hatred rather than fear; the zebra's reaction is pure fear.

I have seen a group of zebras so paralyzed with fright by the sight and smell of tigers that for a whole day they were unable to perform. We keep our zebras as far away from the cat-barn as possible.



Three members of the tiger sector of my act in a remarkable pose. To the left a group of lions that you cannot see have set up a terrific roaring and the striped trio respond by leaning forward on their pedestals and baring their teeth.

Thousands of pictures have been taken of my act, but this is the first one that shows the synchronized reaction of a group of animals. The tigers responded to the roaring of the lions in such complete unison that the photograph shows the trio paralleled in a harmony as exact as that of a mathematical equation.



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Lions are great arguers. Here is a balky one baring his teeth and snarling his defiance of my cue designed to get him off his pedestal.

Note the expressions of the other animals. Looking from left to right, we have an interesting study in rebellion (with the exception of the third animal from the left, a temporarily calm and complacent lioness).

The class in animal-training will now come to order and teacher will ask a question: "Which of the animals in this picture presents the greatest hazard?" The animal facing me? Guess again. This lion and I get along fairly well. His defiance is mainly bluff and in a few seconds he will be doing my bidding. The animal on the extreme right is the one that worries me the most. The others are seated, while he is standing, on the highest seat, ready to spring.



This is what might well be termed “close quarters.” The open jaws of the angry lioness are not more than a foot from my arm, and her mate, the lion on the extreme left, also is ready for business. The lioness in the center is the one that I am trying to put through her paces. The others are interlopers, who have come along in the characteristic way that lions have of ganging up. My technique now will be to drive the two unbidden guests back to their pedestals, before I continue my immediate job with the lady in the center.

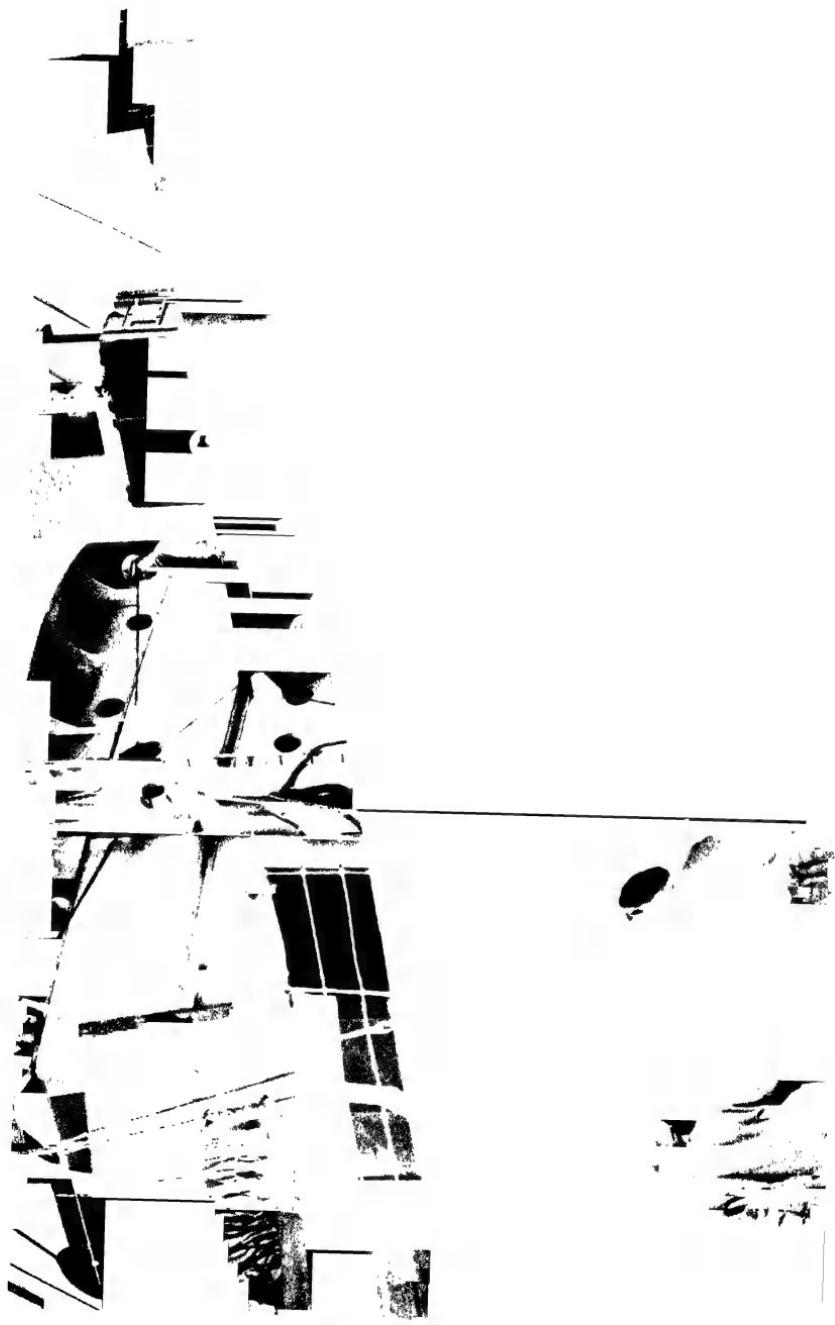


This photograph illustrates a situation I do not like. For a whole minute—which is a long time in the big cage—the tiger refuses to face me, circling around me instead. It is up to me to keep moving with the animal, to prevent him from getting set for a “heavy” spring.



Swinging a cageful of tiger over the side. Most circus animals are imported direct from the veldt and the jungle.

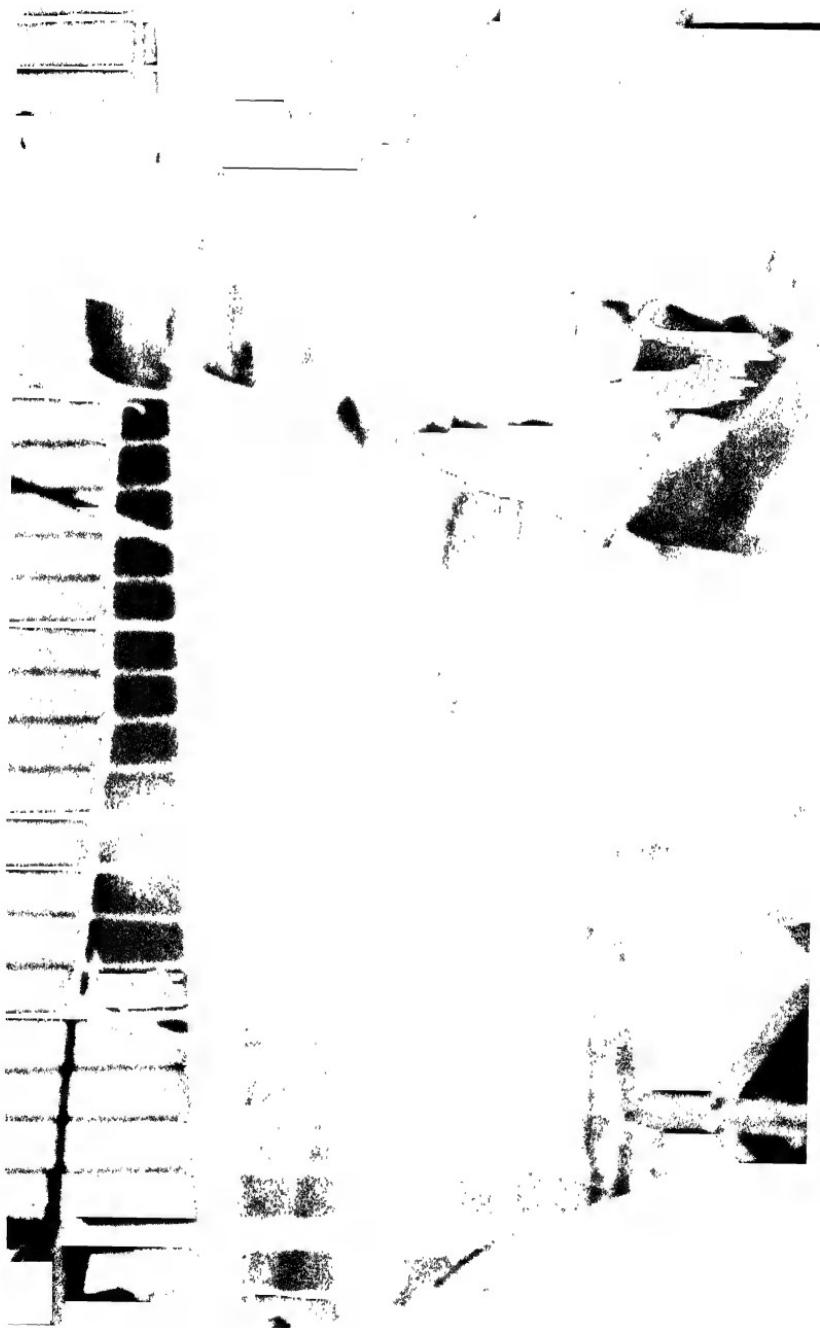
Training the big cats would be much less expensive if lions and tigers born in captivity were more dependable. With few exceptions, such beasts do not make good performers and it is necessary to comb Africa and Asia for my raw material.



Here are two handsome American-born cubs that I grew so fond of I decided to add them to my act. But before they were one-year-olds I realized that the result would not justify the effort. They had been fondled and petted too much (see Chapter I) and soon developed all the unpleasant characteristics of spoiled children.



A lion cub that for some time was my mascot. He followed me around like a dog and showed plainly that he wanted me to play with him. But when he reached the age of six months, I had to forswear him as a playmate. He began to delight in using his teeth and claws, and while people continued to tell me how cute he was, I found it necessary to confine him to a cage.



“My favorite animal in all the world is Timber,  
my police dog. I seldom go anywhere without  
him. He tours the country with me, and when  
the season is over, he goes where I go.”



A partly trained lioness who has not yet become reconciled to life in the arena. The females of the species are usually much quicker than the males to acknowledge that I am boss. The lioness here depicted, however, is a die-hard. All I have succeeded in teaching her, after two months of hard work, is to mount a pedestal and to leap from it to the arena floor. Even these simple duties she resents, and there is much work to be done before she becomes a finished performer.



Loading up for a performance. I use exclusively .38 blank cartridges. Entering the ring, I carry two loaded revolvers, one in my left hand and the other in a hip holster. An assistant outside the bars has several additional loaded revolvers, ready to hand to me as fast as I empty the one I am holding. I often use as many as fifty cartridges in a single performance, and on exceptional occasions I have had to fire as many as a hundred.

Ordinarily one or two blank cartridges will serve to distract an animal that is starting some mischief, or to secure the attention of one that is not attending to the immediate business in hand. When real trouble begins in the arena, however, I am sometimes obliged to fire many shots in succession.



He may look playful, but that uplifted paw can do a lot of damage in the twinkling of an eye. I am in an awkward position, with my chair too close to the cage for easy maneuvering. If he doesn't promptly swing right in response to the crack of my whip, I shall probably play safe by pushing him back with a flash of the blank-cartridge pistol in my left hand. The chair is moved not merely with the hand, but in this case with assistance from hip and knee. I always wear gloves, partly for the slight protection they afford, and partly because the whips are likely to blister my bare hands.



The great cats frequently are amusing studies in contradiction. This lion, after gently placing his right forepaw on my chair (which he could have shattered with one quick blow), decides to bare his teeth and snarl.



“Practically all the close-up photographs for ‘The Big Cage,’ ” said the critical camera-man, “show you facing an animal or group of animals. Let’s see you with your back to them—try your hypnotic eye on the audience for a change!”

Parenthetically, that stuff about the “hypnotic eye” is nonsense, as I’ve explained so often to the camera-man that he uses it just “to annoy.” But the pose he has asked for is not an easy one; in fact, it is pretty dangerous, and you will notice that I have not really come completely around as he requested. My feet are placed so that I can whirl instantly into the reverse position. The animals behind me are so close that they could be on me in one swift movement.



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The “big cage” is a steel arena thirty-two feet in diameter. It is built in sections which are clamped together so that they can be quickly set up and taken down, twice a day, at the afternoon and evening showings. Above the steel bars, a network of stout rope is suspended from the roof, so as to give complete protection to the audience. The animals enter and leave the cage through a timber chute, seen at the back of the photograph. The pedestals are arranged in a circle around the edge of the cage.



At the left of the photograph is seen the "safety-cage" through which the trainer enters and leaves the arena, and to which he tries to retire if things get too hot for him inside. An attendant is constantly stationed at the door of the safety-cage, which swings inward toward the arena. In this picture, a little mix-up in the seating arrangements is being straightened out. One of the lions has mounted the wrong pedestal, and is being persuaded to come down and go where he belongs. Meanwhile the other performers are watching the proceedings with tense alertness, ready to spring into action if things look good for a little general rioting.



A difficult moment for a reluctant performer. The tiger is being asked to mount a high pedestal which will bring him into very close proximity with two exceedingly hostile lions. He wouldn't mind it so much if he could be face to face with them, but the idea of exposing his hind quarters to their very restive forepaws is one which has no charms for him. The method used to persuade him is this: Having got Mr. Tiger about as far as shown in the photograph, I let him rest for a few moments, while I go through the motions of fighting the lions with my whip.



Here you see me lightly dismissing an enormous tiger in a bill-board. This is the safest form of animal-training and is recommended to the beginner. Our publicity man occasionally calls upon me for a job of this kind, and, as I haven't the slightest fear of bill-board tigers, I always comply. Note the look of annoyance on the animal's face. This is because I am waving him away without even looking at him. Tigers like to be taken seriously.



RING  
BARN

Grand Vainqueur  
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ROSÉ









